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## BRITAIN AND RUSSIA





# BRITAIN AND RUSSIA

AN HISTORICAL ESSAY

By

K. W. B. MIDDLETON

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## CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION AND BEGINNINGS OF ANGLO-RUSSIAN CONTACT (1553-1798)

### § 1. *Introduction*

WHAT is it that determines the ideas of one people about another? Sentiment and prejudice? Superficially perhaps so. But popular opinion about foreign countries is usually an unconscious reflection of deeper and more solid considerations, and subject to change accordingly. In Elizabethan times Spain was the national enemy of England; and the typical Spaniard seemed to Englishmen a cruel bigot. The power of Spain declined, and they discovered that he was really a harmless and romantic individual. Next it was the French from whom danger might be apprehended, and who, consequently, were regarded as vicious militarists. Then the German, a studious, inoffensive person to our great-grandfathers, succeeded to the part of leading villain; and the Frenchman turned out after all an amiable character. During the nineteenth century an ugly form towered in the background of the European stage, that of a giant Cossack, wearing a fur cap, a great-coat reaching to his heels and crossed bandoliers, flourishing a knout, the embodiment of barbarous oppression. One day the Cossack vanished, or rather he underwent a remarkable transformation. An even more sinister figure took his place: the Bolshevik, fanatical, unkempt, gory and blasphemous. Only rarely, and so far for short periods, has the Muscovite appeared to British eyes in a favourable light. Partly it may have been due to a Russian inclination to forms of government repugnant to our notions, and partly to temperamental differences between the Russian and British peoples. But also, and no doubt in the main, it has been the result of a persistent series of conflicts of national policy, engendering rivalry, fear and suspicion.

In the beginning Anglo-Russian relations were almost wholly commercial, and, since the needs of the two countries were complementary, conduced to friendship. Opposition started in the eighteenth century, when Russia under Peter the Great and Catherine II emerged as a great Continental Power and, what concerned Britain more closely, a respectable naval Power. Before the end of the century the quarrel over the sick man of Europe, Turkey, that was to divide the two nations so long, had already been foreshadowed. Its development was interrupted by the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, which led twice to an





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alliance between Britain and Russia, in each case followed by a breach and to yet a third, and this time final alliance against the enemy of both. Victory over Napoleon brought, as usually happens, disagreement between the allies, now indisputably the two most powerful nations of Europe and the world, the one by virtue of land, the other of sea power. There was, naturally enough, some jealousy on both sides. The British resented the territorial gains made by Russia and the growth in prestige and influence which her share in defeating Napoleon secured to her. The Russians looked with envy on the wealth of England, enormously increased by a struggle that, in terms of devastation and loss of life, had cost her only light sacrifices compared to those of Russia and other Continental countries that had been theatres of war. The erratic Tsar Alexander I, a generous idealist one moment, a capricious despot the next, was not a monarch to get on easily with the ruling English Tories, self-satisfied and unimaginative but also level-headed men; if not enlightened themselves at least more responsive to the spirit of the new century than their colleagues across the Channel. They were the heirs of the younger Pitt, brought up to distrust Russian schemes and mindful that not once but on two recent occasions, while British resistance to the French aggressor never faltered, a Russian ruler had come to terms with him, on a basis of common hostility to England. Waterloo had not been won when a serious dispute arose because British statesmen opposed the Tsar's designs for the settlement of eastern Europe; and, after peace was concluded, a fundamental divergence of principle manifested itself between the three autocratic great Powers, Russia, Austria and Prussia, on the one hand, and the two liberal great Powers, Britain and France on the other. The former, anxious to maintain the stability of a Europe infected by revolutionary agitation and nationalist fever, stood for conservatism and repression. The latter, having freed themselves from feudal institutions, came more and more under the influence of progressive, middle-class ideas. They were disposed to support movements of reform and national revival, of which they themselves had little cause to be afraid and which embarrassed the other three great Powers. They execrated the Holy Alliance of the autocracies and most of all its mainstay, Russian Tsardom.

The Tsar, however, while to Western eyes he was a gaoler, appeared a saviour to the submerged nationalities of south-eastern Europe, heaving and muttering under the heel of the Ottoman Sultan. Here the British and French were on the side not of freedom and civilization but of stagnation and tyranny, and the Russians were looked to as liberators. It was not because Britain and France loved the Turk; nor altogether, though racial sentiment and religious feeling were powerful factors, because Russia longed to help the Balkan Christians. National interest, or what traditional diplomacy conceived to be such, impelled the Russian emperor to attack, and the Western Powers to defend, the decrepit Ottoman Empire. On this issue the Tsar was divided from his brother autocrats. Austria, indeed, had a more direct motive for opposing Russia's entry into the Balkans than either Britain or France. At length

the British and French found themselves dragged into a war against Russia for the preservation of Turkish integrity, and Russia, isolated in the face of the active or passive hostility of all the other Powers, had to acknowledge defeat, after a conflict as inconclusive in its results as it was accidental in its origin. Twenty years later the history of the Crimean War appeared on the verge of repeating itself, when Anglo-Russian enmity, kept alive by other causes of friction, flared up again over the Turkish question. Nor, even although this time the crisis was peacefully surmounted and British statesmen abandoned their useless attempts to prevent the dismemberment of Turkey, did hostility between British and Russians diminish. The seat of trouble only shifted from the Near to the Middle and Far East.

At first it was centred in Afghanistan, to which remote country the advance of Russia's dominions in central Asia was considered by the British to be a danger. As a maritime power, with comparatively weak land forces, Britain has always been particularly nervous about the frontier of her Indian possessions, by far the most valuable and important part of her subject empire. She has therefore tended to magnify out of proportion to reality any development which could conceivably constitute a threat to Indian security. The Russians, who had learned to dislike the rich islanders and welcomed the discovery of a weak point in their elusive defences, made the most of these apprehensions. With the delimitation, however, of the Russo-Afghan boundary, China became the main theatre of Anglo-Russian dissention. The British were fortunate in having Japan to fight their battle for them in the Far East, while they held the ring to prevent outside interference. Much to the surprise of the world, Japan was victorious over the Tsarist empire and obtained a foothold in Manchuria, which she was later to use as a base for the subjugation not only of China but of all eastern Asia as well. We have paid dearly for our encouragement of Japanese ambition, though Russian policy was largely to blame for the Russo-Japanese War and few could have foreseen at the beginning of the century how great a menace Japan would become.

Just as Russian expansion, checked in the Near East, sought an outlet in other quarters, so the set-back in the Far East turned it again in a westerly direction. There were already signs that the next scene of Anglo-Russian collision would be Persia and the Persian Gulf, when the attitude of the two countries towards one another changed completely, in a manner that demonstrated how relatively trivial their disagreements had been; and a common enemy brought them once more, as in the time of Napoleon, together. The first decade of the twentieth century saw the final accomplishment of a diplomatic revolution that divided Europe into two groups, the one composed of France, Russia and Britain, the other of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. The same grouping has remained, in spite of changed circumstances, up to the present day. Prudent statesmanship in both countries, skilful French mediation and above all the brutal and blundering ambition of William II's Germany forced British and Russians, not very willingly

or whole-heartedly, to set aside their quarrels and unite in self-preservation. The outbreak of the first World War naturally made their relations more cordial and rendered possible an agreement about the future of the crucial region of the Middle East. Whether harmony would have been maintained after the war, if Tsarist Russia had come to the Peace Conference of Paris as an ally of Britain, nobody can say. The empire of Nicholas II was too weak, morally and materially, to sustain the simultaneous pressure of the German military machine from without and discontent from within. Its fall set going a train of circumstances that broke every link between the British and Russian peoples.

In the civil war that arose out of the Russian Revolution, our country backed the losing side, for reasons that flowed almost inevitably from the decision of the winners to make a separate peace with Germany, but with consequences of immeasurable disadvantage to any possibility of friendship with Soviet Russia. The initial misfortune was followed by a persistent, and less pardonable, refusal on the part of the British governing class, whose judgment was distorted by hatred and prejudice, to realize that Bolshevik rule had come to stay. Moreover, Anglo-Russian relations became an electoral issue in our domestic politics, and the preponderant party, representative of property and tradition, had an interest in exciting public opinion against the iconoclasts of Moscow in order to keep itself in office. For their part, the new rulers of Russia, misled by their faith in an imminent collapse of the capitalist system everywhere and with the purpose of forestalling a renewal of armed intervention by the Powers, declared war on all other governments. They poured out a continuous stream of propaganda, the only weapon at their disposal, but a powerful one, designed to subvert the existing social order in capitalist countries and hamper their enemies by stimulating pro-Soviet sympathy among the working classes. From a number of motives this country was singled out by Russian Communism as the chief object of attack. Britain had not ceased to be the heart of capitalism. If overthrown here, it would have received a mortal blow throughout the world. The strong British labour and trade union movement appeared to offer a fertile field for revolutionary activity. Britain, also, remained the greatest imperial Power, and the Soviet message was directed to oppressed peoples as well as oppressed classes. But there was another, and even more potent, factor. The British had been foremost in intervening on the side of the White counter-revolution. They continued to be the most implacable, to Russian eyes, of all foreign opponents. From the beginning, but more and more obviously as time went on and hopes of the spread of Communism abroad dwindled, the theoretical interest in converting other countries to the gospel of Karl Marx had to give way to the practical necessity of safeguarding the Soviet state against outside interference. Until the rise of Hitler and the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, it was from the side of Britain, above all, that foreign interference might be expected.

As usual with innovators, the Bolsheviks tried in every respect to do just the opposite of their predecessors. That Tsarist Russia should have pursued a particular policy was a sufficient reason why they should

adopt the contrary. They were all the more inclined, therefore, to quarrel with the Western Powers, the allies of Tsarism, and make friends with republican Germany, from whom, indeed, so long as she was kept disarmed by the chains of Versailles, Russia had nothing to fear. Furthermore, as in the eighteenth century, a common hostility to Poland formed a tie uniting Russians and Germans. To Britain and France collaboration between Moscow and Berlin appeared a nightmare. A Red Russia was bad enough. But the prospect of a Red Germany, combining military and technical efficiency with revolutionary fanaticism, inspired at the same time with class and national hatred against her former enemies, was something infinitely worse. The Communists, on the other hand, who trembled at the thought of a conspiracy of capitalist nations to destroy them, discerned in British attempts to put an end to the Franco-German quarrel and the making of a sinister scheme against the Soviet motherland. That the idea had small relation to reality, like a good many other ideas held by Communists, did not prevent them from taking it seriously. It is true that Soviet leaders had domestic reasons for exaggerating the peril, as British Conservatives had for making the most of the Bolshevik menace.

Asia was again a principal scene of Anglo-Russian discord after the Revolution, in circumstances not so different from before as they seemed at first sight. Communist propaganda in Asiatic countries had as its aim national rather than social revolt. By encouraging the subject peoples of the East to rise against the rule of their imperialist, and especially their British, masters, a double object would be attained. In the first place, the foundations of capitalism in the great imperial states, whose prosperity depended on their colonial possessions, would be shaken. In the second place, the interests of the Soviet state would be served by winning the gratitude of those downtrodden peoples and thus obtaining their support for the maintenance of Soviet rule and influence in Asia. The former of these objects may have seemed more important to academic Communists, but the logic of events favoured the latter. In spite of its professed, and by no means insincere, abhorrence of imperialist exploitation and of great services rendered to the aspiring nations of the East, the Moscow government showed very clearly, in Transcaucasia and Mongolia for example, that it had no wish to preside at the liquidation of the Tsarist Empire. When Soviet aid was bestowed on the victims of imperialism, from Turkey to China, in their struggle for national independence, it was not solely from anti-capitalist principle, but also from a desire to uphold Russia's position in Asia against that of other Powers, and in particular against the British Empire. The old Anglo-Russian rivalry had reappeared in a new guise. In fact, the situation of the two empires (for the Soviet Union is a Russian Empire under another name) is such, now as in the nineteenth century, that, whatever forms of government they may assume, they must either co-operate or collide in Asia.

At the fifteenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution British relations with Soviet Russia were almost as bad as they had ever been. Then the recurrence of danger from Germany, now under Hitler's rule.

and the Japanese threat to both countries in the Far East compelled them again to a reconciliation. Again, French diplomacy was the medium. On the British side reluctance was even more marked than before. Not so on the Russian. The Communist dictatorship, with characteristic tactical opportunism, or, if you prefer, realism, abandoned the old, and pursued the new, policy in complete disregard of half-measures. Soviet Russia joined the League of Nations, which every good Communist had derided and condemned the day before, allied herself with bourgeois France, just as the Tsar had done, stopped fomenting proletarian revolution against capitalist governments and worked to establish a union of all democratic elements, with the object of opposing the advance of Fascism. The aim was sound, but its execution clumsy. Moscow overplayed its hand and succeeded in frightening the timid Western Powers, which began to think that their association with Russia might rather precipitate than prevent another European war. The sudden Communist conversion to the principles of democracy and liberalism, in other countries, was far from dispelling capitalist and conservative distrust and dislike. Could it be a subtle scheme to involve the capitalist nations in war for the profit of world revolution? Intent on dividing their adversaries, the Fascist Powers exploited these fears and suspicions skilfully, and finally Hitler was able, on the issue of Czechoslovakia, to achieve a complete triumph, obtaining for Germany the mastery of central Europe and tearing into shreds the partnership of Russia and the Western Powers.

By their capitulation at Munich the latter secured a short respite for themselves. But when the time came at which they were forced to choose between fighting and a further bloodless defeat, they had to fight without a Russian ally. The consequences for France, and very nearly for Britain, were calamitous. Nor did Russia derive advantage in the end by deciding to pay the Western Powers back in their own coin and make a pact with Hitler. It only served to postpone his invasion of the Soviet Union until there was no danger in the rear to distract his attention from the road to Moscow. The capital was saved, but by a narrow margin, and the whole force of the Teutonic scourge lashed the Russian people and ruined the richest part of their country. Stalin's agreement with Hitler, which for a time seemed the preliminary to a joint attack on the Western Powers, brought Russia and Britain to the verge of open war. Tension was relaxed after the surrender of France, and, as the shadow of the coming German invasion of Russia deepened, London and Moscow began to look to each other for support. The blow fell, and within a matter of a few weeks the common struggle united British and Russians in a way that would have required decades in time of peace. It led them, not merely to forget their dissensions, but to conclude an alliance more far-reaching than any in modern British history, and one whose full significance cannot yet be apprehended. Hitler alone could have produced the extraordinary, yet inevitable, friendship between Churchill's Britain and Stalin's Russia. Yet a friendship between two nations at war with the same enemy, founded on their common peril and kept warm by their common emotion, may fail when the conditions that gave

rise to it change. Will it be firm enough to resist the post-war reaction that has already begun, now that the German danger has been surmounted, or will estrangement follow victory as in the years after Napoleon's downfall? How will the Muscovite giant appear to us a generation from now? It is easy to talk of the necessity of preserving Anglo-Russian unity. To achieve this objective is going to be difficult. More detailed consideration of the causes and incidents of a quarrel that lasted a century and a half, with brief interruptions, may help to show some of the pitfalls to be avoided in the future.

## § 2. *Early years*

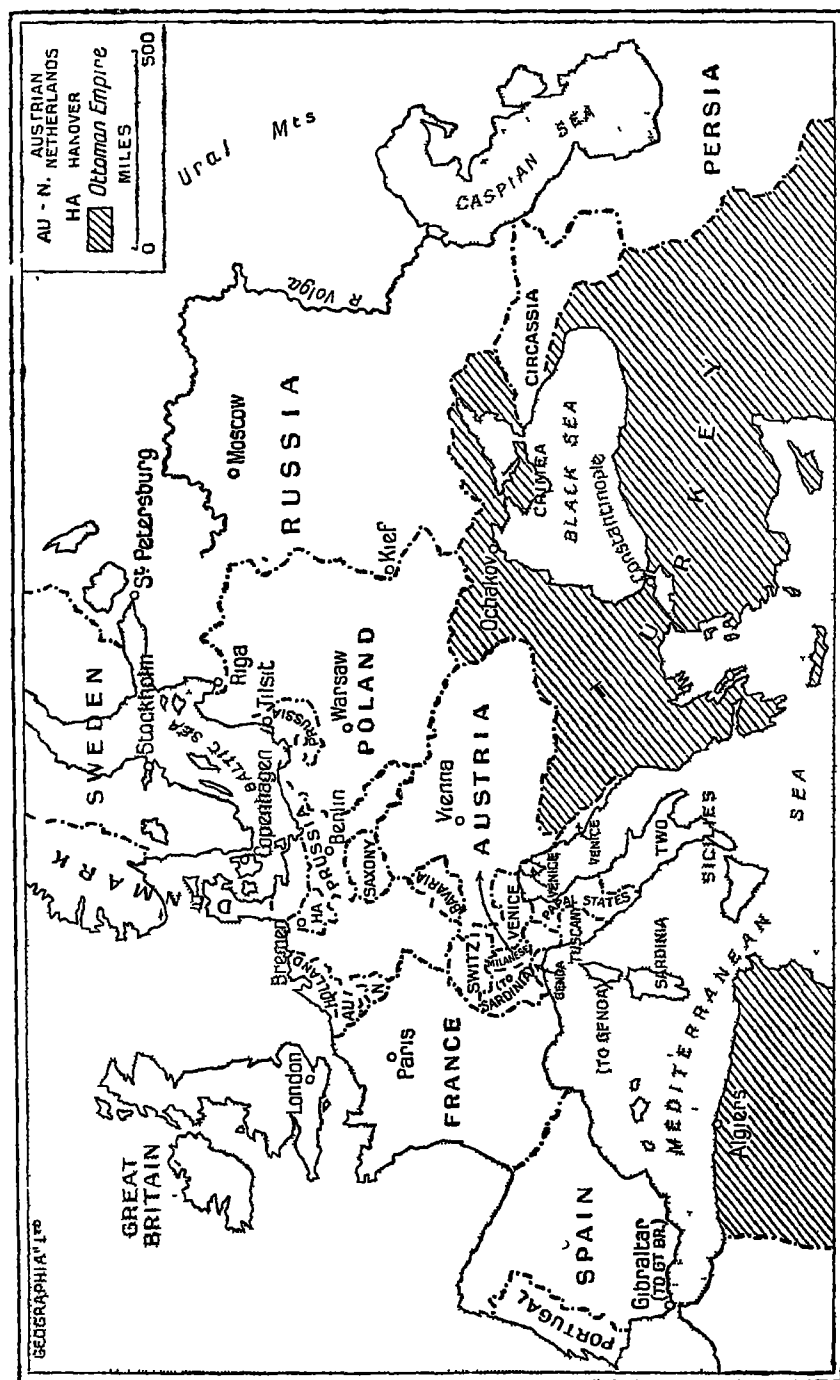
Russia was an unknown country to the English until the middle of the sixteenth century, when an accident started intercourse between the two countries. In the year 1553 an expedition consisting of three ships, sent by merchant adventurers in London to discover a north-eastern passage to India and China, sailed round the North Cape into the Arctic Ocean. Two of the ships were lost. The third, the *Bonaventure*, master Richard Chancellor, entered the White Sea and anchored at the mouth of the river Dvina, near where Archangel now stands. Chancellor learnt from the primitive inhabitants of the place that they were subjects of the Tsar of Russia, or Muscovy, and, bearing a letter of recommendation from Edward VI, he visited Ivan the Terrible in his capital. The Englishman received a cordial welcome from the Tsar, who was very anxious to establish direct communication with western Europe. On Chancellor's return to England a company was founded for trading with "Muscovy, Persia and Northern lands", afterwards known as the "Russia Company"; and two years later Chancellor landed again on the White Sea coast. Valuable commercial privileges were bestowed on the Company by the Russian monarch, including a monopoly of trade by the northern route to his dominions. From this time onwards English vessels regularly visited Russia, and the importance of Anglo-Russian trade resulted before the end of the century in the foundation of the town of Archangel, for long Russia's sole sea-port.

Another Englishman who found favour at Moscow was Anthony Jenkinson, the explorer. He was entrusted with a message from the Tsar to Queen Elizabeth, suggesting an alliance between the two nations. Ivan, indeed, put himself forward as a suitor for the Queen's hand, and, when this singular hope was disappointed, still thought of marrying an English princess. Politically, however, the interests of England and Russia were at that epoch too remote from each other for the idea of an alliance to be practicable. Occasional embassies exchanged between Whitehall and the Kremlin were all that the relations of the two governments required. Strange tales were brought back to England on these occasions of picturesque Muscovite savagery, and from time to time Russian envoys of uncouth bearing and aspect, "dropping", in Macaulay's phrase, "pearls and vermin", excited the wonder of the English Court.



When the young Tsar Peter visited England in the reign of William III, the citizens of London repeated the same kind of stories about the outlandish potentate and the habits of his suite as their descendants about King Amanullah of Afghanistan. Even those who had the opportunity of closer observation were as far from discerning the abilities and presaging the future achievements of that extraordinary ruler as of suspecting that within a hundred years the empire of his successors would be acknowledged as one of the foremost of European states, and would challenge England to a contest for the supremacy of the Levant. Bishop Burnet, who had a number of conversations with the Tsar, owned that he was not without capacity and had more knowledge than might be expected in view of his indifferent education. The bishop judged, from his mechanical turn of mind and his passion for ships, that he was "designed by nature rather to be a ship's carpenter than a great prince". But Peter was no Amanullah and his country was no Afghanistan. Nor was his interest in maritime affairs just a boyish hobby, like that of poor Louis XVI in mending clocks. The navy that Peter had determined to create for himself was more than a toy fleet. Thanks to his conquests at the expense of Sweden and the foundation of his new port and capital, St. Petersburg, Russia became a Baltic Power; and England, by this time the leading commercial and naval state of Europe, could not be indifferent to what was happening in those waters. Apart from the value of British trade with the Baltic, which was considerable, imports from the Baltic countries included essential war materials, like timber, hemp and pitch.

The battle of Poltava, where Charles XII of Sweden met with disaster at Peter's hands as irreparable as the fate that overtook subsequent invaders of Russia, is rightly accounted one of the decisive battles of history. Until Russia reached the Baltic her part in European affairs was inevitably small. The destiny not only of the two countries immediately concerned but of the whole continent was altered when Sweden's place was taken by Russia as the most powerful nation of the North. At the beginning of Peter's reign his country had no direct outlet to the world except by way of the Arctic Ocean. Russia's neighbours made it a point of policy to encourage her isolation. Thus until late in the seventeenth century the Poles would allow no Russian pass through their territory. In the west, Sweden and Poland barred the road to the Baltic and central Europe. In the south, the Ottoman Empire prevented access to the Black Sea and held the mouths of the great rivers that flow into it. Eastwards, Siberia stretched for thousands of miles, an uninhabited, though not an unexplored, wilderness. To break through to the open sea and secure a more kindly coast than that of the frozen Arctic was a necessity, if Russian were to be a European Power. Only so, Peter knew, could his huge, backward empire be brought into close contact with advanced countries, and learn from intercourse with them the arts and sciences to enable it to emerge from darkness. Hence, as much as from natural inclination, his practical lessons in the shipbuilding yard of Mynheer Calf at Saardam and his interest in the wharves of Deptford. Fortunately for Peter, his neighbours at the beginning of the eighteenth century were



on the verge of decline ; Poland especially, Sweden and Turkey less obviously. Whereas his country was growing in strength and awakening from its semi-oriental slumber.

The transformation of the Principality of Muscovy into the Russian Empire was a gradual process that had begun long before Peter's day and would be completed after him. It was far from being solely due to a few able rulers, still less to one man, with all respect to his enormous personal contribution. The fact that, in spite of the hatred with which Russian conservatives in his lifetime and ever since have regarded Peter, and of the series of mediocre sovereigns who came between him and Catherine the Great, his work, or most of it, remained is the best proof that it represented the aspirations of the Russian people as a whole. It is mistaken to suggest that he was an eccentric tyrant of genius who forced Western ideas upon a passive herd of subjects. Peter's own energy led, his foreign advisers and technicians helped, but his victories in war and peace were Russian victories, won by Russian soldiers and workmen, with Russian blood and sweat. No doubt his methods were rough and arbitrary, like those of his spiritual descendants, the Bolsheviks, and his reforms, like theirs, seemed to take small account of the wishes of the population. But we get a distorted view of other peoples, particularly one, like the Russian, whose development has been so far apart from ours, by looking at them through the spectacles of liberal individualism. Each has its own way of acquiring civilization and enlightenment.

If a definite date is to be fixed for the beginning of modern Anglo-Russian relations, the year of Elector George of Hanover's accession to the English throne, 1714, is as good a one to select as any ; the same year in which Charles XII, returning to his own country after a long sojourn in Turkey, whence he had fled after the defeat of Poltava, provoked a crisis in the Northern War. Owing to the connection between England and Hanover, the former became involved, politically as well as economically, in Baltic affairs. For George I, anxious to obtain for Hanover the Swedish towns of Bremen and Werden, joined a league of enemies of Sweden which was inspired by the reappearance of the incorrigible and redoubtable Charles. The harmony of the league, however, was less than its strength, and the Hanoverians especially soon began to have suspicions of their ally, the Tsar of Russia. Charles' ingenious minister, Goertz, saw an opportunity to break up the hostile coalition and retrieve the situation for Sweden, by making peace with her chief enemy behind the backs of the others. She might be able to keep her German possessions, at the price of handing over to Russia Karelia, Ingria, Esthonia and Livonia, that is to say the coastlands of the Gulf of Finland, which there was in any case no hope of reconquering. Russian and Swedish envoys had already begun to negotiate, when Goertz's schemes, which included a Russo-Swedish invasion of Scotland on behalf of the Old Pretender, were brought to nothing by the musket ball that terminated the career of Charles XII in the trenches before Frederikshald. His successor lost no time in cutting off Goertz's head and reversing the direction of Swedish policy. Treaties were made with Hanover, Prussia and

Denmark. George I was confirmed in his possession of Bremen and Werden, and in return undertook to send an English fleet to the Baltic to help Sweden against Peter. The promised fleet set sail in 1720 for the Baltic and penetrated into the Gulf of Finland. But it proved to be of little assistance to the Swedes, who next year were compelled to conclude with Russia an ignominious treaty of peace.

In this first clash between Britain and Russia mutual hostility was half-hearted. Although they felt some uneasiness at the disturbance of the Baltic balance of power caused by Russia's rise under Peter the Great, the English ministers of George I had small regard for his German ambitions, all the more because English economic interests were likely to suffer from bad relations with Russia. Peter, on the other hand, while it might suit his purposes to play with Jacobite intrigues, was not the kind of man to entertain romantic ideas about the restoration of the Stuarts. His personal leaning was towards the Maritime Powers, England and Holland, so long as they did not interfere with him.

Peter the Great's Baltic projects were not pursued by his immediate successors, and the navy which was his pride was allowed to decay. While Russia carried on a series of unfruitful wars with neighbouring states, Britain under Walpole kept as aloof as possible from foreign affairs. But the growth of commercial and colonial rivalry with France and Spain drew her again, as has always happened in British history, into Continental politics, in spite of the pacific Walpole. The turning point of the eighteenth century was the diplomatic crisis of 1756, followed by the opening of the Seven Years' War. Hitherto France and Austria, the two leading states of the Continent, had been irreconcilable opponents. Now they decided to bury their traditional enmity, Austria because of Maria Theresa's hatred of Frederick the Great of Prussia and her desire to recover Silesia, of which he had robbed the Hapsburgs; France largely with the object of detaching Austria from England, with whom a struggle extending from the Bay of Bengal to Lake Superior was about to begin. The consequences were to throw Prussia and Britain together and bring about a general European war in which these two Powers were engaged on one side, and France, Austria and Austria's ally, Russia, on the other. Russia and Britain, although relations between them, which had previously been good, naturally suffered, remained at peace throughout the war. For a quarter of a century after its end British statesmen showed themselves anxious to gain the friendship of the Empress Catherine II. The elder Pitt declared that he was "quite a Russ", and one of his first measures on forming his administration of 1766 was to set in motion plans for an alliance of Britain, Prussia and Russia against the House of Bourbon. Accordingly envoys were dispatched to the Courts of Berlin and St. Petersburg. Frederick, who disliked England as a result of her desertion of his cause in the Seven Years' War, was not favourable to Pitt's plan. Catherine was more polite than her brother monarch of Berlin, but hardly less reluctant to pull English chestnuts out of the fire. This rebuff did not deter the British from renewing their overtures in later years, and regarding with complacency, or even encouraging,

Catherine's designs of aggrandizement at the cost of Poland and Turkey. They were no more desirous all the same, of involving themselves in the concerns of eastern, than Russian of western, Europe. A certain sympathy existed between the two countries, proceeding from economic ties and a common hostility to France, whose diplomatic influence in Sweden, Poland and Turkey was obnoxious to Russia. But it was a sympathy that stopped short of any closer association.

The same year in which Pitt tried to obtain an alliance with Catherine the Great saw an important Anglo-Russian treaty of commerce concluded. Trade between Russia and Britain increased greatly during the eighteenth century, by way of Archangel but especially of the Baltic, and their commercial intercourse continued to be more intimate than their political. The many Englishmen and Scotsmen who entered the Russian service before and after Peter the Great had also some effect. One of Peter's principal generals, in the early part of his reign, was a soldier of fortune from Aberdeenshire, Patrick Gordon. The Tsar took back with him to Russia, from his visit to England, a number of experts and skilled workmen, and his navy owed much to British maritime experience. As late as the war between Russia and Sweden at the end of Catherine the Great's reign, the admiral in command of the Russian's Baltic fleet was another Scotsman, Greig. It could scarcely be said, however, that the mutual acquaintance of the British and Russian peoples was anything but the slightest. Highly coloured accounts reached England of the fantastic luxury of the Russian Court and the vagaries of Potemkin and other imperial favourites, of Cossacks pillaging Berlin and mythical battles won by a terrible soldier named Suvorov against the infidel Turk. Some Russians began to find their way to this country, and even to the Universities of Oxford and Edinburgh. English novels, by Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, were translated into Russian, and adaptations of Shakespeare were made, by Catherine herself among others. But the superior prestige and merit of French culture far outshone that of any other Western country, and, by the time of the French Revolution, the Russian upper, in other words the educated, class habitually spoke French and derived their ideas from France. Their knowledge, such as it was, of England, was rather filtered through Montesquieu and Voltaire than drawn from the source.

### ✕ § 3. *Catherine the Great and Pitt*

During the latter part of the eighteenth century circumstances drove Britain and Russia into antagonism and very nearly into war. The first cause of estrangement was the high-handed and unpopular manner in which Britain made use of her naval supremacy to interfere with neutral trade during the American War of Independence. There had been friction previously, in the Seven Years' War, from the same cause, and it was to recur later. Russian irritation over this matter, and Catherine's desire to assert her power, led to a declaration addressed to the belligerent states, which put forward certain principles of maritime law in respect of

neutral rights. The Russian fleet was to be employed to defend Russian commerce against infraction of these principles. Sweden, Denmark and other neutral countries associated themselves with Russia in the Armed Neutrality ; and at the end of 1780 Britain found herself in an unpleasant, and in fact dangerous, position ; at war not only with the American colonies but with France, Spain and Holland as well, and menaced by the neutral states under Russian leadership. The British had not a friend in the world. Catherine's stroke was all the more resented because it was quite unexpected. At the outbreak of the American War she had expressed herself warmly on the side of England. She never had any liking for rebels. But the Armed Neutrality was not intended to be much more than a gesture, and when the Dutch, who had been taking some hard blows, appealed to the Tsarina for support, on the ground that their adhesion to Russian principles of maritime law had involved them in hostilities with England, she refused to do anything for them.

A series of awkward incidents followed. The British complained of high import duties on their products, of a navigation law directed against British shipping, which, however, continued to carry a great part of Russian trade, and of a Russian refusal to renew the Anglo-Russian commercial treaty. The Russians, on their side, had grievances against England, notably the help given to the Swedes, who, under their rash king Gustavus III, had suddenly attacked Russia and had been assailed in the rear by Russia's ally, Denmark. The Danes were told by Britain and Prussia that, unless they desisted, a Prussian army would march into Holstein and a British fleet would sail to the Sound. They desisted. Gustavus was saved from ruin, and enabled to make peace with Catherine on much better terms than he deserved.

The connection between Britain and Prussia, which originated in the affairs of the Low Countries, led in a short time to a more serious quarrel between these two nations and Russia. The occasion was an attempt by the governments of Frederick William II and George III to compel Catherine to give up to Turkey an obscure place called Ochakov, on the Black Sea coast between the mouths of the Bug and the Dniester. It is not necessary to go into the immediate reasons for Anglo-Prussian interest in the then desolate shores of the Euxine, beyond saying that Prussia was moved to take the part of the Turks for certain purposes of her own, chiefly in Poland ; and that Britain decided to support Prussia because of the usefulness of the Prussian alliance in western Europe. Catherine and her subjects reacted energetically and defiantly to the threat of British and Prussian intervention, which seemed to them an impudent as well as hostile proceeding. Preparations for war were made on both sides, and instructions were actually sent to the British minister at St. Petersburg to present an ultimatum to the Russian government, with a time limit of ten days. At the last moment the Cabinet in London thought better of it, and dispatched a special messenger to St. Petersburg to countermand the ultimatum before it reached the Empress. The final result was that the Russians retained Ochakov and made peace with Turkey on their own conditions, that Catherine scored a great diplomatic

triumph and the British suffered a galling defeat, and that the alliance between London and Berlin, so carefully cherished by the younger Pitt, foundered.

Soon afterwards the states of Europe were engulfed in the wars that arose out of the French Revolution. When they emerged, the old problems of eighteenth-century politics were forgotten, or at any rate revived in quite new forms. But the Ochakov affair is of profound importance to Anglo-Russian history. It was the first sign of the long and acrimonious conflict between the two countries that marked the period from the Congress of Vienna to the end of the nineteenth century. We might go so far as to say that the effects of that abortive British ultimatum can still be traced in the relations of Soviet Russia, Britain and the Turkish Republic. The alliance between Britain and Prussia, which was the direct cause of the affair, scarcely constituted a sufficient explanation. The truth would seem to be that, from the time when Pitt came to power, the British attitude towards Russia had undergone a change. The clash in Peter the Great's day, due to Hanoverian interests, was only a passing incident. Such friction as there had been under the successors of Peter, including Catherine II during the first part of her reign, was not serious. British trade with Russia was very valuable. Even after the lapse of the commercial treaty it amounted to about £3,000,000 in yearly value, a large figure in those days, both absolutely and compared to the value of trade with other countries. Britain had felt hitherto no tenderness towards the Ottoman Sultan, who, indeed, had a long-standing tradition of friendship with our enemy, France, that dated back to the alliance of Francis I with Suleiman the Magnificent in the early sixteenth century. British ships were rarely seen in the Black Sea, and trade between Europe and the Levant by the Mediterranean was mainly French. But now the thought of Catherine's already vast and expanding empire awakened a vague disquiet in London. English imaginations were beginning to conjure up the picture of the Colossus of the North, the glacier slowly but irresistibly advancing and relentlessly crushing every obstacle in its path, which so impressed our Victorian ancestors.

Peter the Great had pushed his way on to the stage of European politics by way of the Baltic, but his schemes of penetration to the Black Sea had been frustrated. His victim was Sweden. He was obliged to leave Poland and Turkey to Catherine's mercy. The first partition of Poland between Russia, Austria and Prussia had already taken place before the Ochakov affair. The end of Poland's independent existence was in sight; and Catherine's chief object was to extend her dominions southwards. By this time she had waged one successful war against the Turks, and had afterwards annexed the Crimea, thus obtaining a strategic position for the control of the northern littoral of the Black Sea and for the domination of its waters by a Russian fleet. In Catherine's first Turkish war Britain had favoured the Russian cause, and, when she occupied the Crimea, Fox exerted his diplomatic influence on her behalf. The younger Pitt, however, exchanged the pro-Russian policy of his

father and Fox for an anti-Russian one. The Muscovite state, upsetting the balance in northern and eastern Europe and threatening to swallow up Poland and Turkey, was becoming, in his view, a common danger. Then, too, there were commercial reasons, mentioned above, for ill feeling and an idea in Britain that we were too dependent on Russian imports. There was the unpleasing memory of the Armed Neutrality. Englishmen heard with apprehension of Catherine's visionary design to place her grandson, Constantine, whose name had not been given him by accident, on the throne of a resuscitated Byzantine Empire. The position of Russia, by now assured, among the great Powers of Europe rested in the last resort on a succession of victories over rival armies, especially over Charles XII's Swedes at Poltava and Frederick the Great's Prussians at Kunersdorf. Military prestige did not cause British jealousy. But when Russia showed signs of becoming also a great naval Power, with fleets supreme in the Baltic, the Black Sea and even possibly the eastern Mediterranean, the matter appeared in a very different light. Fear of Russia as a possible maritime competitor was, perhaps, at the bottom of Pitt's attitude. His intervention against Denmark might be considered as the first phase of a policy directed to a restoration of the naval balance of power; Ochakov as the second.

Only less significant than Pitt's attempt to check the Russians on the Black Sea is the fact that the attempt was abandoned, because of the strength of the opposition in Britain to going to war, for the sake of Prussians and Turks, with a friendly nation on a question so remote from British interests. In Parliament Fox and Burke spoke vehemently against the government. Fox argued that, so far from thwarting the Russians, our natural allies against France, with consequent injury to our profitable trade with them, we should rather desire their success. Burke declaimed, like Gladstone at a later time, against an "anti-Crusade, for favouring barbarians and oppressing Christians". He was amazed that Pitt should be ready to throw his own father's foreign policy to the winds and commit the country to a reckless adventure on such frivolous grounds. The Opposition won. But in the end it was Pitt's policy that prevailed.

Catherine the Great's long reign, the most glorious in the history of Tsarist Russia, came to an end within a few days of the famous exploit of young General Bonaparte on the bridge of Arcola. From that time, until he fled from the field of Waterloo nineteen years later, European affairs revolved around one man. The illustrious Empress was followed on the throne by her undersized, pug-nosed and demented son, Paul. Catherine's last years had been occupied with the concerns of Poland, whose disappearance from the map of Europe she just lived to see. It was her aim to get Russia's rivals, Austria and Prussia, involved in war with the French, so as to leave her hands free in eastern Europe. The more they busied themselves with avenging Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and the outraged principles of legitimate monarchy, the larger the share of partitioned Poland that would fall to Russia. While Catherine lived, though her love for the French Revolution was no greater



than that of Poincaré for the Russian, the enemies of republican France obtained little from her but promises. The new Tsar was less cautious ; and in December, 1798, Pitt secured a treaty of alliance, by the terms of which Russia undertook to provide troops to fight the French, and Britain to pay a large subsidy to the Russian government. This treaty, the forerunner of subsequent Anglo-Russian treaties against Napoleon, began a new chapter in the relations of the two peoples. Incidentally, it was also a landmark in British financial history. For to meet the expenses of the forthcoming campaign and of the Russian subsidy Pitt imposed a novel and most hated tax upon his countrymen, the income tax.

## CHAPTER II

### X ALLIES AGAINST NAPOLEON'S FRANCE (1798-1821)

#### § 1. *The Failure of the Coalitions*

WITH the first French Republic and the first Napoleon, Britain remained at war continuously for over twenty years, except for a short truce after the Treaty of Amiens. The Russian Empire during the same time was at war with France for only half a dozen years in all; and for two periods, one of some length, was allied to France and hostile to England. This fluctuating attitude had nothing really strange in it. For, while France and England were renewing a desperate struggle whose causes lay deep in their history, Franco-Russian enmity, until Napoleon's invasion of Russia, was merely casual. The Tsars Paul and Alexander I might send their armies to fight against the French in Germany, Italy or Holland, and Russian troops might display in these distant lands their traditional endurance and bravery; but the Russian and French peoples, before 1812, had no cause for hating each other like the French and English. Catherine the Great's success and popularity, like those of our Queen Elizabeth, were based upon the way she identified her policies with the ambitions and prejudices of her subjects. Her intervention in the affairs of Europe were strictly limited in scope. She would stir up trouble, when an opportunity arose, in order to derive profit from the confusion of her fellow monarchs. But her eyes were firmly fixed on two constant objectives, Turkey and Poland. Catherine's successors, like her predecessors, were too ready, from a Russian point of view, to be influenced by theoretical and sentimental prepossessions, dislike of Frederick the Great, disapproval of the principles of the French Revolution, admiration for Napoleon, or something else, apt to conflict with the national interests of Russia. Yet it was probably inevitable that Russia, as a major European Power, should be drawn into the great struggle sooner or later, even without Napoleon's direct attack on her territory. French activities on the Continent were too vast in extent and too upsetting not to provoke Russian counter-measures.

British co-operation with Russia against France passed through three phases. The first, consequent on Pitt's treaty with the Emperor Paul, was short-lived and undistinguished. The second followed Pitt's alliance with the Emperor Alexander I. It lived only a little longer and was as fruitless as the first. The third phase was precipitated by Napoleon's invasion of Russia, in the same way as Anglo-Russian co-operation resulted from Hitler's invasion in 1941, and lasted until after the French menace had been finally disposed of. The interest of the Napoleonic period lies not least in the instructive resemblance between the effects of French aggression then and German aggression in our day upon the relations of the two countries. There is something else than coincidence in the resemblance. At the beginning of the nineteenth, as in the second quarter of the twentieth, century, Britain and Russia were both vitally interested in the European balance of power. But in distinction from the other leading European states, they were concerned almost as much with extra-European affairs, and were more or less remote from the central axis around which Continental politics revolved, a line, that is to say, following approximately the course of the river Rhine and extending from Amsterdam to Venice. Britain's geographical position made her more sensitive to any disturbance along this line than Russia and therefore she was the more liable to become involved in a general European war. On the other hand, she could retire safely behind her sea-moat in case of need; whereas Russia, although further away, had a long and exposed western frontier and was thus the more vulnerable ultimately to attack by a dominant land Power. It was natural that British and Russians should come together when the heart of the Continent fell under the supremacy of a rival state and the danger to both became apparent; and also natural that the former should be the first to be affected, but the latter should end by bearing the brunt.

In fulfilment of the Emperor Paul's treaty with Pitt, a British fleet sailed to the Baltic, took on board a considerable Russian force and landed it, together with a rather larger British contingent, on the coast of Holland. The command of the Russo-British army was given to the Duke of York, a son of George III, but otherwise of merit out of proportion to the lofty column that commemorates him in the centre of London. After some hard and indecisive battles with General Brune's French and Dutch republicans, the allies were obliged to sign an inglorious convention and evacuate the Continent. Neither of the allied armies was much impressed by the other, nor did the Russians extol the commander-in-chief. Another Russian army was led by Suvorov, now an old man, to aid the Austrians in Italy, where that great general won some notable victories. But the Russians and Austrians soon fell out, and Paul in disgust decided to withdraw from participation in the war against the French Republic.

This was sane enough; but the Tsar, whose head was stuffed with illusions and follies, went from one extreme to another. He conceived an immoderate rancour towards his late allies, especially the British,

and an ardent devotion to General Bonaparte. To the dismay of his subjects he gave orders for the seizure of all British ships in Russian harbours and the internment of their crews. He wrote to his new friend, addressing the upstart dictator in flattering terms, with the suggestion that Russia and France should unite against perfidious England. To be fair, the imperial anger, though unbalanced, did not altogether lack justification. British naval power was in its way as oppressive as French military power. With the active encouragement of the First Consul, Paul was able to form a maritime league of Baltic Powers and revive the Armed Neutrality of the Empress Catherine II. This time it was meant to be more than a gesture. But the British were not inclined to allow their weapon of blockade to be blunted, nor, as in the American War, compelled to swallow their indignation. Immediate measures of retaliation were taken. A fleet set sail from Yarmouth under Admirals Parker and Nelson, and the Danes were defeated in a battle off Copenhagen before their confederates could join them. The effect of this battle, and still more that of a simultaneous change of government at St. Petersburg, was decisive, and the league collapsed.

Paul had become intolerable to the Russians. His eccentricities, hardly to be distinguished from insanity, alarmed and exasperated everyone, not excluding the members of his own family, and made his country ridiculous in the eyes of the world. Important dispatches from the British government were returned to his ministers unopened, with holes slashed through them by a pen-knife, in his fury against the tyrants of the sea. A proclamation by the Tsar was published in the official gazette, inviting the sovereigns of Europe to come to Russia and settle their disputes by personal combat, with their principal ministers as seconds. But St. Petersburg was deprived of the spectacle of George III and Napoleon, supported by Pitt and Talleyrand respectively, fighting a chivalrous, if unequal, duel in order to terminate once for all the secular quarrel of their peoples. It was resolved that Paul must be got rid of before further damage was done to Russian interests. A party of conspirators burst into the Tsar's apartments one night; an act of abdication was presented for his signature, and on his refusal he was strangled. When Nelson sailed into the Gulf of Finland, thirsting to destroy the Russian fleet, he found himself met, to his disappointment, by soft words from the new ruler, Alexander I; Anglo-Russian differences were adjusted, and both countries made treaties of peace with France.

Towards the end of 1804 a confidant of the youthful Russian emperor, by name Novosiltsov, arrived in London on a special mission to the British Cabinet. The Peace of Amiens had already come to an end and hostilities had been renewed between Britain and France. A great army of French troops was encamped at Boulogne, practising embarkation and disembarkation on flat-bottomed barges, while a favourable chance was awaited to cross the Channel and carry the war on to English soil. It was a prospect exactly the same as that which confronted us in the latter part of 1940 and beginning of 1941. There

were two weapons lacking to Napoleon, which made the threat less formidable than Hitler's : the aeroplane and the submarine. So long as British ships commanded, as they did, the Strait of Dover, Britain could afford to snap her fingers at "Boney." Nevertheless the situation was anxious. Britain was as isolated and Napoleon as supreme on the Continent as Hitler after the fall of France. The minor Powers were for the most part his vassals ; Prussia and Austria were overawed. The only great Power on the Continent willing and able to resist was Russia.

Not without reluctance on the part of the Tsar, his government this year broke off relations with the French Empire and prepared for war, essentially because of the threat to Russia, ultimate if not immediate, which Napoleon's growing and grasping military despotism constituted. The purpose of Novosiltsov's mission was to give expression to Alexander's views on the objects at which a possible Anglo-Russian alliance against France should aim, and to sound the intentions of the British government. The views laid before Pitt and his colleagues were remarkable ; and, indeed, Alexander was one of the most interesting characters who ever sat on a throne. He realized that the old Europe of the eighteenth century was gone beyond recall, that the task of the new age was to realize the two guiding ideas, which, propagated by the French Revolution, were destined to alter the soul, as the Industrial Revolution the body, of Western civilization : the idea of individual liberty and the idea of nationality. Britain and Russia, he suggested, should combine to free Europe from the yoke of Bonaparte, but not merely so as to re-establish ancient abuses. The opportunity of the great upheaval produced by the French wars should be seized to remould the antiquated political structure of Europe ; to introduce a system of states with rational frontiers and homogeneous populations, enjoying constitutional liberty according to the will of their citizens ; and to establish a league of nations which might secure lasting peace between them. In a significant phrase, and one that has a familiar echo to us, Alexander hinted that Russia and Britain should continue together to exercise a degree of permanent preponderance in the affairs of the Continent, since, in distinction from the other great Powers with their irreconcilable ambitions, they were the only countries "which are invariably interested in the reign there of justice and order, the only ones which by their position can maintain it."

The reply of Pitt to these admirable and far-sighted, but cloudy, propositions was chilling. As far as the liberation of Europe from the French was concerned, he agreed with the Tsar. But it appeared quite plainly from Pitt's answer that the British government had no sympathy whatever with the generous schemes of Alexander. Its aim was the purely practical one of building up as strong an anti-French coalition as possible, and of preventing a recurrence of French aggression in the future. Apart from some consolidation of the European states, and especially an enlargement of those bordering on France, the Continent should, if Napoleon was overthrown, be put back where it had been before the "calamitous era" of the Revolution. It is true that the

British note concluded by advocating that the European Powers should enter, after peace was made, into a general treaty of mutual guarantee of their territorial integrity. This might seem to show that Pitt accepted at least one point of the Tsar's post-war policy. Or was it, perhaps, thrown in only to humour the Russians? Might it even be a clever way of turning Alexander's views to account against himself and insuring against any further expansion of the Russian Empire? It was ominous that Pitt made no mention of Turkey, which the Tsar in his memorandum had been very careful to distinguish from the other states of Europe. It would be awkward in the extreme if the Tsar were requested to exchange a guarantee of territorial integrity with the Ottoman Sultan. Alexander was mortified by the failure of the British government to share his idealism. He had always been inclined to suspicion of England, and averse from what seemed to him her selfish policy and mercantile outlook. Nevertheless the negotiations continued, and in April, 1805, an alliance was signed, to which Austria was induced to adhere. As in previous coalitions, the Continental Powers were to provide the men and Britain the money, to the tune of £1,250,000 for every 100,000 regular troops put into the field by Russia and Austria.

The campaign of 1805 was disastrous to the allies. In an incredibly short space of time Napoleon marched to the Danube, forced the Austrian general Mack to surrender, occupied Vienna and routed the united armies of the Emperors Francis and Alexander at Austerlitz. Austria had to make peace. Next year was Prussia's turn, and Napoleon rode into Berlin in triumph. But the Russians, in spite of their losses at Austerlitz, remained to be dealt with; and they proved to be more formidable enemies than either Austrians or Prussians. The battle of Eylau looked rather like a French defeat, and Friedland, though a decisive, was not at all an easy, victory. On both sides the casualties in this campaign, especially at Eylau, were enormous. The Russians fought alone against the whole might of Napoleon; necessarily, so far as the Austrians and Prussians were concerned, for those countries were in no position to assist. But what about Russia's ally, Britain? While the French armies were pouring eastwards, away from the Channel coast, Nelson destroyed the French fleet at Trafalgar. England, safe herself, might be expected to bring some aid to her friends in their hour of distress. But England did virtually nothing: nothing, that is to say, for her friends, although quite a lot for herself, in places, like the Cape of Good Hope or South America, where her naval power could be employed to advantage and other European nations were unable to interfere.

The explanation lay partly in Pitt's death and the accession to office of the Whigs, who were disposed to peace with France. It was not, however, an excuse calculated to appeal to the Russians. Their demands for a "second front" against France in western Europe were pressing, almost as pressing as similar demands at a later crisis in history. In December 1806, for example, we find the British ambassador writing to his government from St. Petersburg as follows: "At court this morning

his Imperial Majesty again urged, in the strongest terms, the expedience of a diversion on the enemy in the north of Europe by a powerful expedition to the coasts of France or Holland." And in the following month: "I must not conceal from your Lordships that the silence of His Majesty's government, respecting a military diversion on the coast of France, has not produced a favourable impression either on the ministry or people of this country." Not merely did the Whigs refuse to make a diversion in the West. In spite of the great wealth accumulated by British sea power, they declined to guarantee a loan of £6,000,000, which was indispensable if Russia were to equip new armies to continue the struggle against Napoleon. The Whig government soon went out of office; the Tories came in again, with an able and unscrupulous Foreign Secretary, Canning; and a naval and military expedition to the Baltic was prepared. It arrived there too late to help the Russians, for the Tsar had already decided to make peace. But it did not waste its time. Neutral Denmark was attacked, half of Copenhagen laid in ruins and the Danish fleet brought back to England, in case it should fall into hostile hands.

## § 2. *Tilsit to Vienna*

"I hate the English as much as you do, and am ready to second you in all your enterprises against them," were the first words addressed to Napoleon by Alexander when he stepped on to the celebrated raft of Tilsit. This was diplomatic tact, and also something more. The Tsar's previous suspicion of England had been turned into bitter resentment by her failure to support him against the French. He had been brought up on French ideas, and had always been half inclined to admire Bonaparte. Now the irresistible conqueror fascinated him. For the next five years he was not only at peace with the French Emperor, but to some extent an ally and associate. He did not forget the schemes which he had put forward in the Novosiltsov mission. But he gave up for the time hope of achieving them in co-operation with England and against Napoleon. If the Napoleonic empire was a military despotism, with points of resemblance to Hitler's Reich, it was also, unlike Nazi Germany, a great civilizing, levelling instrument, sweeping away vested interests and feudal tyrannies with ruthless beneficence. There might well be doubt in the mind of Alexander whether it were desirable to unite with Bourbon kings, German princelings and the commercial oligarchy of England against this progressive force.

The Tsar's change of policy towards France was, in any event, prudent in the interests of his country, even though his temporary enthusiasm for Napoleon took him further than it was either wise or honourable to go. To continue the war without aid from others would have been possible only at immense cost and risk, which no Russian government could rightly incur in view of Napoleon's willingness to come to a reasonable agreement. Prussia was utterly crushed and

reduced to what she had been before Frederick the Great made her a great Power. Austria was humbled and dismembered. England had shown her incapacity to intervene effectively on the Continent. The balance of power had been so deranged that it seemed some new device must be invented to take its place. If the French were to hold the empire of the West, might not Russia possess that of the East? By entering into the treaties of Tilsit, Alexander was able to save his country from invasion, and at the same time to pursue the traditional aims of his predecessors against Sweden and Turkey on the Baltic and the Black Sea.

There were, however, grave drawbacks for Russia in the project for partitioning the world between them, with which the new Charlemagne dazzled the heir of the Byzantine emperors. Tilsit was not in reality what it professed to be, an arrangement between equals, a fact that did not long escape the Russians for all Napoleon's flatteries. They had not been disgraced, but they had been beaten and ejected from central Europe. They were forced to comply with the French demand that they should break with England and enter into the Continental System, closing their ports to British trade. This was highly detrimental to Russia, since it both deprived the country of overseas goods and cut off the chief market for Russian exports. The partial resuscitation of Poland as a French protectorate, under the name of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, proved very distasteful to Russians. And in the background there was the French veto on Russia's possession of Constantinople, that most glittering of prizes. If it had not been clear before Tilsit, it was obvious afterwards that Napoleon would never tolerate the existence of another great Power in Europe or, for that matter, in Asia. He had made a truce with Russia, as he had with Britain at Amiens; but his craving for conquest, both on personal and political grounds, was insatiable.

It is not surprising that strong anti-French influences soon made themselves felt in St. Petersburg, and that the impressionable Tsar himself began to become more and more disillusioned about his ally of Tilsit and more and more disinclined to help him against the English, or in any other way. But Alexander was extremely anxious to remain at peace with France. He knew that, if war came, it would be fought in Russia. Indeed, the Russian plan of campaign for the war, when it was seen to be inevitable, was defensive, if not defeatist. The genius of the great Corsican habitually produced in his opponents a paralysing state of nervous apprehension. As for Napoleon, he started on the campaign of 1812 with a light heart. Had he not the greatest army that had ever been seen on earth under his command, and was he not the most famous general of modern times? Neither he, nor the rest of the world, including Britain, expected that he would have much difficulty in bringing the Russians to heel. He had beaten them before. Now, in spite of English intrigues, they were weaker and more isolated than in previous campaigns, while he had at his disposal, not only his incomparable French veterans, but troops from half the countries of Europe, even contingents of Austrians and Prussians. A minority of

the invaders were Frenchmen. Napoleon, and the world, were wrong. He forced his way, without at first effective opposition, far into the boundless and inhospitable land, won the bloodiest of his battles at Borodino and entered Moscow, as he had so many other cities. But the Russians refused malignantly to submit. He had miscalculated the obstacles of climate and geography and the problems of supply, but, above all, he had underestimated the patriotic spirit of the people, from Tsar to peasant. He was not the first, nor the last, man to fall into the same fatal errors.

The remnants of the Grand Army were hunted back over the borders of Russia, and the Napoleonic empire sustained a wound that proved to be the main cause of its collapse. But, however crippling, it was not necessarily a mortal wound. Napoleon might still have kept his throne, and France some of the territorial gains made since the beginning of the Revolution. That this did not happen was due in large part to Alexander, who, in opposition to the opinion of some of his subjects, would not rest content with the expulsion of the invader from Russian territory. He was determined, when Austrians and Prussians and even the dogged British were disposed to waver, that there should be no compromise with the man whom he regarded, since the burning of Moscow, as the embodiment of evil. The idea of a regeneration of Europe revived in his mind and mingled with an element of religious exaltation, which from this time never left it. No doubt also the prospect of riding down the Champs-Élysées at the head of his cavalry of the Guard and displaying his magnanimity and charm to the French populace was alluring.

The prominent share taken by the Tsar in the events leading up to the fall of Napoleon, and later at the Congress of Vienna, though Alexander was right in believing that there could be no permanent pacification of Europe until the French emperor had been overthrown, did not turn out wholly to the advantage of his own country. Russian prestige was raised very high, but at the cost of arousing the jealousy and hostility of the other Powers that claimed credit for rescuing Europe from the tyrant. The Tsar's good will towards mankind in general, and the invaders of 1812 in particular, French and Germans and Poles, besides irritating his subjects, distracted his attention from domestic problems, which were numerous and difficult enough to merit the utmost degree of concentration and energy. His reign had begun with ardent hopes of reform. The accomplishment was disappointingly small. In Europe, too, his projects had little result. The liberal institutions which he intended to set up at home and abroad withered away, or were never even tried in practice; the elevated ideals turned sour; the ancient abuses returned; the Holy Alliance, designed by him to be the charter of a confederation of free nations, degenerated into an instrument of despotism and reaction.

We should not, on the other hand, conclude that Alexander's efforts went for nothing. The cause of civilization owes much to idealists like him, whose careers seem to end in frustration. The commanding position that the Russian autocrat occupied in the councils of Europe gave his



idealism, like that of President Wilson at the Peace Conference of Paris, weight and effect. A striking parallel, indeed, might be drawn between the parts played by Alexander at Vienna and Woodrow Wilson at Paris a hundred years later. And the confederation of European states which the Tsar had in mind, and which became almost a fact for a few years after the Congress, was more than a forerunner of Wilson's League of Nations : the one was the direct ancestor of the other. Both schemes were abortive. But the Concert of Europe, that vague, yet real, principle of solidarity that united the great Powers throughout the nineteenth century and enabled them to regulate, with intermittent success, the affairs of the Continent by common action, was the practical outcome of Alexander's benevolence. Nor would it be sensible, at this time of day, to declare the final failure of the League of Nations.

Four of the five great Powers came to Vienna as victors. The fifth, France, unlike Germany later at Paris, was also present ; and, thanks to the skill of Talleyrand and the divisions of the others, had an important voice in the deliberations of the Congress. Of the states of the Quadruple Alliance, Britain and Russia were pre-eminent, because they were at once the strongest and also, on a majority of the issues involved, the most disinterested. The hour seemed to have come for that preponderance of the two nations in European affairs, of which Alexander had written to Pitt ten years earlier, to make itself felt. Russia had been responsible for the heaviest blows struck at Napoleon and was the greatest military Power ; Britain had a small but efficient army, with the most distinguished of allied generals, unchallenged dominion of the seas and complete financial supremacy. Without British subsidies, the Continental armies that defeated France could hardly have been equipped and paid. Britain, too, had the moral advantage of having been the most persistent enemy of Napoleon. She could claim with some justification to have saved herself by her exertions and Europe by her example.

If they agreed to work together, Britain and Russia were in a position, all the more because of the personal ascendancy exercised by Alexander over the Prussian king, to order things much as they pleased. There were no obvious reasons why they should not. Instead, Britain made a secret alliance with Austria and France, directed against Russia and Prussia, and contemplated starting one of the longest and bloodiest wars of European history all over again, in concert with her late enemy and in opposition to her late partners.

The principal cause of this astounding quarrel was a disagreement about the fate of Poland, with which the question of Saxony became linked. It was the dream of Alexander to repair the injustice done to the Poles by the notorious series of partitions that obliterated their unfortunate country in the reign of his grandmother, Catherine. To his aim of restoring Poland he was passionately attached, and the fact that he came to be even partially successful in achieving it is much to his credit. For there were immense difficulties in the way. Austrians and Prussians had the strongest objection to a revival of Poland in any

form whatever ; his own countrymen hated the Poles bitterly ; the Poles themselves were a high-spirited people, conspicuously lacking in moderation and incredulous of the good intentions of a Russian Tsar. The old Poland had been a political monstrosity, whose integral restoration would have proved both impracticable and undesirable. But the Poles were content with nothing less. Indeed, they hankered after the still more inflated Poland of previous centuries, when almost the whole Ukraine had been Polish territory. Alexander was not prepared, and it would not have been in any case possible for him, to offer them their pre-partition boundaries, which included large populations more Russian than Polish, nor to grant them full independence. A reduced Polish kingdom, confined to really Polish territory and bound to Russia by a personal union of crowns, was as far as he could go. And in order to obtain Prussian consent it became necessary to back the claim of Prussia to annex Saxony, as compensation for her share of the Polish spoils. Nothing could be more obnoxious to Austria than the schemes of St. Petersburg and Berlin. But Austria could not, even with the aid of Bourbon France and the minor German states, resist the will of the Russian and Prussian monarchs. The deciding factor proved to be the attitude of England ; and England threw all her weight on to the Austrian side.

Perhaps, from a British point of view, there were solid reasons for supporting the Hapsburg Empire, as a conservative and stabilizing force in Europe. And the persuasive Austrian minister, Metternich, knew how to make the best of them so as to influence his British colleague. Yet the very decided line which Castlereagh took in the matter was surprising. There seemed to be no country in Europe of smaller concern to Britain than Poland, unless it were Saxony. We cannot doubt that the real motive which prompted Castlereagh was less pro-Austrian than anti-Russian, and that he regarded Austria as a useful dam to keep the rising Russian flood away from central Europe and the Balkan peninsula. Anti-Russian ideas had, as we have seen, taken root in Pitt's mind before the French Revolution ; and the Tory statesmen who carried the war against Napoleon to its conclusion thought like him. In spite of the common struggle against France, the events of the war rather strengthened than weakened suspicion of Muscovite intentions. If Russians had cause of complaint against their British ally, so had Englishmen against the Russians, whose conduct during the war had seemed to the former fickle and even sinister. The episode of the eccentric Emperor Paul had been disturbing ; Tilsit positively alarming. Could one be quite certain that the last had been heard of the Franco-Russian conspiracy to divide up the world between them ? Might Alexander not be just a cunning hypocrite, cultivating liberal sympathies and evangelical piety as a cloak to hide vast plans of aggressive ambition ? This was unjust to the Tsar, but it is true that his character was incalculable and his policies unreliable. Like other well-meaning people, he was apt to identify his own interests, or whims, with the good of humanity. His lofty views on the subject of Poland involved a great

to settle the affairs of Europe between their two countries on altogether bolder and more generous lines than the actual solution? To forward, as Castlereagh did, the interests of the Hapsburg Empire was necessarily to stifle the national dreams, not only of Poles, but of Germans and Italians, not to mention the other peoples of that ramshackle structure. In this lay the seeds of many troubles and ultimately the primary cause of the first World War of 1914 to 1918.

### χ § 3. *The Triumph of Metternich*

In the interval between the fall of Napoleon and the opening of the Congress of Vienna, after brilliant ceremonies in Paris, the Emperor Alexander and the King of Prussia crossed to England at the invitation of the Prince Regent. The Emperor of Austria, who was also invited, did not accept. He was afraid of being outshone by his imperial brother of St. Petersburg. For Alexander and the Russians were the heroes of the day. The Prussians came next and the Austrians, to the annoyance of Castlereagh, a bad third. The royal visitors and their attendant statesmen and generals received a tremendous welcome in London. It was reported that there were never less than ten thousand people in the neighbourhood of the Pulteney Hotel, Piccadilly, where the Tsar stayed for a fortnight, trying to get a glimpse of him, and that traffic came to a complete standstill at certain times of the day. There were illuminations and fireworks, a naval review at Portsmouth, academic honours at Oxford, the most sumptuous banquet ever seen at the Guildhall. But, despite popular applause, the visit, so far as Alexander was concerned, was not a success. He barely concealed his contempt for the Prince and the Tory ministers, and consorted rather ostentatiously with the leaders of the Opposition. The consequences were that the Tsar left England more irritated than ever against the British government, which had already shown obvious signs of a desire to thwart his plans for the settlement of Europe; and that the future George IV and the Tories conceived an extreme and lasting dislike for the ruler of Russia, a circumstance that went to strengthen Castlereagh's pro-Austrian and anti-Russian policy at the Congress and subsequently. Nor did Alexander make a very good impression on the Whig magnates, who were suspicious already of this odd autocrat.

As for the British public, its enthusiasm for foreign monarchs quickly evaporated, and, with Napoleon in Elba and Louis XVIII on the throne of France, it turned its attention eagerly to domestic affairs. The Congress excited little interest; opinion in Britain was exercised over the Slave Trade but hardly at all about the reconstruction of Europe. After the exciting interlude of the Hundred Days, indifference to Continental events was resumed. A reaction is to be expected at the end of every great war: something like the same thing occurred in 1919 and the following years. The public mood turned isolationist and

exerted a hampering influence on the foreign policy of Castlereagh, in a manner that Lloyd George was to experience at the end of the first World War.

Isolationism, however, was deepened by the character of the Vienna settlement. The contrast between the magniloquent phrases and exalted hopes current when the allied armies entered Paris, and the frivolous intrigues and cynical decisions of the Congress, was at least as sharp as that between the aspirations of November, 1918, and the realities of Versailles ; and too glaring to escape remark even by a public satiated with war and diplomacy. "The sensitive mind of the Emperor Alexander alone," says a distinguished historian, "reflected, as in a distorted mirror, the intellectual tendencies of the times ; and whatever concessions to popular opinion found their way into the treaties were due, in the main, to the supposed necessity of humouring his madness." It is true that the settlement had merits that were not fully appreciated by contemporary, or later, opinion and which it is easier for the present generation to recognize. Judged by the test of results, Alexander, Castlereagh and Metternich built a more substantial edifice than Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau. Yet as individuals they were neither wiser nor better-intentioned. They were more successful because the conditions were more favourable.

Until a short time ago the weaknesses of the Paris settlement were generally ascribed to such causes as the treatment of conquered Germany by the Allies or the failure of the American Senate to support President Wilson. Only since June, 1941, has the fatal handicap of Russia's absence from the councils of the world been properly estimated. A stable Europe was an impossibility without a powerful Russia to keep the balance even in the east. It is largely because such a Russia existed in the one case and not in the other that the arrangements made at Vienna proved durable beyond those of Paris. For the same reason it may be that there are more lessons to learn today from the earlier than the later settlement.

Three months after Waterloo, at a great review of allied troops held near Châlons, the Emperor Alexander solemnly proclaimed the signature of the Holy Alliance by the rulers of Russia, Austria and Prussia ; and all the Powers of Christendom were invited to declare their adhesion to it. Basing their mutual relations on the sublime truths of the Christian religion, princes were henceforward to regard one another as brothers and their subjects as their children, the nations were to form one family bound together by the principles of reciprocal service, and so on and so forth. The significance of this pious pronouncement was greater than the secret mockery of diplomatists perceived. The thoughts of Alexander, who was obstinate in his convictions, were occupied by a scheme resembling that which he had suggested to Pitt in 1804. He wanted to establish a league of great and small European states, providing for the external and internal security of its members and based on mutual undertakings to defend territorial integrity and established institutions. By a guarantee of established institutions the Tsar far from intended

that sovereigns who abused their power should be protected by international intervention against their own subjects. On the contrary, his idea was that, in return for international protection and freed from the fear of revolution, rulers should bestow constitutional liberties upon their peoples, on the model of the charters granted by him to Poland and on his initiative to France. The rights of nations as well as governments were to be safeguarded. It was in order to make his scheme acceptable to as many as possible of his fellow monarchs that he resorted to the apparently vacuous generalities of the Holy Alliance, designed to commit them in principle to his plans; and the religious emphasis, though his piety was sincere enough, was also due to his anxiety to exclude the Ottoman Empire from the league of states that he envisaged.

The defect of the scheme lay in its being far too ambitious. It implied a good will, a unity of purpose and a harmony of interests among states that did not exist any more than they existed at the time of Wilson's League of Nations. Besides, the practical details were not sufficiently thought out. A wide and indefinite right of interference in the domestic concerns of one nation by others was involved. Who would decide, and in what circumstances, that a government should be assisted against danger from abroad or at home? What sanction was contemplated to compel a sovereign to bestow a constitution on his subjects or prevent him from oppressing them? How would the international mandate, supposing agreement were reached, be executed? In vain the Tsar declared that a hundred thousand Russian troops were ready to march at his word from one end of Europe to the other to defend the right. The cure seemed to the statesmen of other countries more perilous than the disease.

Castlereagh had taken a leading part in the formation of the Quadruple Alliance against Napoleon. He desired to maintain it after the end of the war, while extending its scope so as to include France, and thus establish a permanent concert of the principal Powers of Europe for the preservation of peace. He even favoured at first a general guarantee of the territorial provisions of the peace treaties. But his views underwent a gradual modification. After the Hundred Days he was no longer willing to consider a territorial guarantee, and instead advocated periodical conferences of the Powers to deliberate on the affairs of Europe. Three years later, under the influence of isolationist opinion in England, he had moved still further away from his original position. Britain could no longer agree to meetings of the Powers at fixed intervals and pressed for the most restricted interpretation possible of engagements already contracted. The Tsar, however, was more determined than ever to give concrete substance to his scheme for a European confederation. The Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, the first to take place of the periodical conferences of the Quadruple Alliance that had been provided for, showed on the surface a considerable degree of unity among the allies. In particular, British and Russians were agreed about the desirability of releasing France from her fetters and permitting her to resume her due place as a great Power. But Alexander could

make no progress with his wider plan. The divergence of theory between his ideas and those of Castlereagh had already become fundamental and irreconcilable. It was not long before the theoretical difference became one of practice.

The period immediately following the close of the Napoleonic War proved to be a time of nervous unrest all over Europe, including the British Isles. Reaction from above was countered by conspiracy and assassination from below. The flock of royal nonentities brought back by the victory of the allies over Napoleon, perched apprehensively on their thrones, felt the ground heaving under them. Some, especially the Spanish king, were worse than nonentities. It was Spain that led the way with a military revolt in the beginning of 1820, which forced Ferdinand to restore the constitution repudiated by him and summon the Cortes. The revolutionary germ spread, notably to Italy, where another Bourbon monarch, the king of Naples, was compelled to swear loyalty to a constitution. These events brought matters to a head. The time had come, according to the Tsar, for concerted international action to put an end to the disturbances in Spain and Italy. He did not object to the constitutions themselves but to the manner in which they had been obtained ; and the intervention he had in mind was not for the purpose of reimposing arbitrary autocracy, but of restoring the authority of the sovereigns under the collective guarantee of the Powers and on condition of proper provision being made for the liberty of their subjects. There was a good deal to be said in principle for his conclusion, had the means to give effect to it not been completely lacking. The Spanish and Neapolitan revolutions, as well as endangering the peace of Europe, did little for the happiness of the peoples concerned. But the Powers were unwilling to combine for such a purpose. They looked with jealousy and alarm on Alexander's far-reaching proposals, and regarded Spanish and Italian affairs wholly from the point of view of their own interests. In practice the Tsar found himself faced with the choice between two alternatives, either to abandon his ideal of international solidarity and allow Spain and Italy to work out their own salvation, or to agree to forcible suppression of the revolutions by the great Powers nearest to Spain and Naples, without any safeguard against counter-revolutionary excess. He chose the second alternative.

The choice was made easier by a change that had for a long time been coming over Alexander himself. Melancholy, disillusionment and religious mysticism were growing on him. Disconsolate and solitary, the Emperor wandered with a bible under his arm through the galleries and gardens of Tsarskoe Selo. He withdrew his confidence more and more from the liberal advisers of the early part of his reign and gave it to reactionary ministers. Perhaps it was the inevitable result of the conflict between his personal ideals and his position as Tsar of Russia. He had bestowed constitutional liberty on Frenchmen and Poles but not on his own people, most of whom would remain serfs for forty years after his death. Over them he ruled with absolute power, a power resting on the bayonets of his victorious army. A military autocracy, whatever the

individual views of the autocrat, could not afford to look tolerantly on secret societies, popular agitation, above all on rebellious soldiery in nearby countries. The infection had, indeed, been carried back to Russia by officers returning from Germany and France after the Napoleonic War. At a critical moment Alexander appears to have been profoundly affected by the news of a mutiny in one of his regiments of the Guard at St. Petersburg, though it turned out not to have any political significance. This new mood of the Tsar, the crowned Jacobin of former days, could not have been better calculated to suit Metternich, who was anxiously looking out for arguments to convince the Powers of the necessity for Austrian troops to stamp out Italian liberalism.

The turn of Naples came first. Another Congress met at Troppau, to which neither Britain nor France sent plenipotentiaries, and sentence of death was passed on the Neapolitan revolution by the three Eastern monarchies, the original signatories of the Holy Alliance. The declaration issued by the three Powers not merely committed them to rescuing the king of Naples from his unruly subjects, but purported to establish a general right of intervention against states suffering a revolutionary change of government. This statement, the Troppau Protocol, constituted a diplomatic act of major importance in the history of the nineteenth century. It proclaimed the definite conversion of the Russian emperor to the repressive system of the Austrian chancellor, signaled the intimate combination of the three Eastern Powers of Europe that would last for seventy years and form during that period the principal factor in Continental politics, and foreshadowed the split between those Powers and the two great Powers of western Europe. It is true that a final breach between Britain and her allies of the Quadruple Alliance did not occur until two years later, after Castlereagh's death, at the Congress of Verona, which virtually marked the end of the experiment of diplomacy by conference begun at Vienna. The reason lay not so much in the death of Castlereagh, and the fact that his successor deliberately decided to break away from Continental affairs, as in the far greater interest taken by Britain in Spain, whose fate was settled at Verona, than in Naples. The course of events could hardly have been altered had Castlereagh lived to go to Verona. There were commercial as well as political reasons why he and all other British statesmen should be extremely averse from foreign interference in Spain or the Spanish colonies in South America, then in revolt against the motherland.

From the first Castlereagh took up an attitude of sharp and uncompromising opposition to the Troppau Protocol. It is to be observed that the quarrel between the British government and the Troppau Powers was not an ideological one. It went deeper. No British government of modern times has been more reactionary in character than that of which Castlereagh was the leading member, the government of Peterloo and the Six Acts, and the Foreign Secretary was himself the very incarnation of everything that British liberals hated. He had not the smallest sympathy for the Spanish or Italian revolutionaries. It was the principle of intervention he combated, and particularly the

principle of collective intervention by the Powers that the Tsar upheld. In the case of Naples, for example, Castlereagh showed himself willing, and even eager, that Austria should intervene unilaterally to restore despotic rule. What he objected to was that Austria should intervene with the approval and in the name of the great Powers, thus involving England in an awkward Continental entanglement and creating a precedent in other cases. The real reason for his hostility to the Troppau Protocol seems to have been his determination to regain for Britain a freedom of action that she had consented to forego temporarily, because of the Napoleonic menace, but no longer than she could help. The motive was the same as that which led Senator Lodge and his followers to repudiate President Wilson and initiate American isolationism after the first World War. Yet British policy from 1820 onwards was not so entirely selfish as it seemed to Continental statesmen. The arguments that Castlereagh advanced against the plan of collective intervention by the Powers were powerful. Even if the practical difficulties had not been insuperable, the effect of Alexander's scheme would have been to stereotype the order of things established by the Vienna settlement. Sooner or later his confederation would have broken down under the impulse of national and social movements struggling to achieve expression.

On the other hand, British isolation had some undesirable results. It destroyed the unity of the great Powers and threw Alexander into the arms of Metternich, making the Austrian statesman the arbiter of Europe; and it ensured the triumph of reactionary forces throughout the Continent. Instead of concerted intervention by the Powers to restore order, and at the same time impose a measure of constitutional liberty under international guarantee, which might have been secured by Anglo-Russian agreement, the Austrians were permitted to invade Naples, give the perjured king back his absolute power and establish their own supremacy more firmly than ever all over Italy. A little later another foreign invasion enabled Ferdinand of Spain, of whom it was justly said that he had the head of a mule and the heart of a tiger, to recover his authority over the worst governed country of Europe.

Although ideology was not the cause of the break between Britain and the Troppau Powers, the distinction between parliamentary Westminster and autocratic St. Petersburg, Vienna and Berlin unquestionably contributed to it. As Castlereagh pointed out, British policy, dependent as it was on parliamentary control, could not be expected to have the same continuity as that of the Continental monarchies. While a British government could act in concert with autocratic governments for specific and limited purposes, it could not easily enter into long-term and indefinite engagements, such as were implied by the Tsar's dream of a confederated Europe. The natural consequence was that British policy appeared to Russians unprincipled, and Russian policy to Englishmen impracticable. Even a Castlereagh could not completely neglect public opinion at home. The middle class was still excluded from power in Britain, but its influence was growing and its sympathies were strongly in favour of liberalism abroad. The governments of the Eastern states



had much less need to take popular sentiment into account, least of all the government of the Tsar. And, so far as it existed as a political factor, public opinion in Russia, represented by the ideas of the landowners, the Orthodox clergy and the army, constituted a conservative force. The fate of the Emperor Paul showed, and there were the strongest reasons why Alexander should not forget the example, that the freedom of a ruler of Russia to flout the susceptibilities of his subjects had limits. Both as an individual and as a Russian autocrat Alexander's views were almost bound to come into conflict with those of British ministers. Thus before the question of Turkey, which was to be the central issue between Britain and Russia during the nineteenth century, had become acute, the two nations were already on thoroughly bad terms.

#### § 4. *Nineteenth-century England and Holy Russia*

A certain family resemblance may easily be discerned between the attitude of British statesmen to the affairs of Europe after 1815 and after 1919, in spite of the unlikeness of a Lloyd George to a Castlereagh or a Ramsay MacDonald to a Canning. The ideas formulated by Castlereagh in the crucial years following the overthrow of Napoleon were inherited by Canning and Palmerston and passed on by them to Gladstone, Disraeli, Salisbury and Grey. By the beginning of the twentieth century they had developed into a body of traditional principles that hardly anyone thought of questioning. As time went on and the French peril receded apparently for good, the sense of detachment from the Continent grew stronger; and it was only temporarily disturbed by the struggles of Greece and Italy for independence, the concerns of Spain and Belgium, or the problems of the Ottoman Empire. On the whole, the balance of power operated until the end of the nineteenth century to prevent what Englishmen had always dreaded and opposed, the emergence of an aggressive state dominating Europe as it had been dominated by Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV of France and the first Napoleon. The only Powers that seemed disposed to play the part of Continental tyrant were Russia and, for a short time, France under Napoleon III. Not until the late 'nineties did any serious thought of danger from Germany trouble British minds.

Russian policy throughout the century was also in great part determined during the few years after Waterloo. Alexander I's liberal leanings were not, indeed, shared by his successor. But they were transmitted to the following Tsar, Alexander II, and received effect in the great domestic reforms of his reign. The conception of a European confederation never altogether disappeared from the minds of Russian sovereigns. It coloured the outlook of the Iron Tsar, Nicholas I, and inspired Nicholas II to call the Hague Peace Conference at the end of the century. Of more practical consequence was the combination of the three Eastern monarchies formed at Troppau. Blighted for a space

by friction over Turkey, it came to full flower in the 'thirties and 'forties, was apparently killed off by the Crimean War and resuscitated by the diplomacy of Bismarck in the form of the League of the Three Emperors. The Dual Alliance between France and Russia in the 'nineties signified its final destruction. The origin of the friendship between Austria, Russia and Prussia is to be found in the eighteenth-century agreement of the three Powers to partition Poland ; and it was Poland more than anything else that kept them together in the nineteenth. To Russians, however, co-operation with the German Powers was an expedient only, and a far from popular one. Like Britain, if not so successfully, Russia tended as far as possible to detach herself from Europe in the course of the century, until the German danger forced her to reconsider her attitude. Like Britain she was unaffected by the revolutions of 1848, that rocked so many thrones, and took no part in the conflicts that led to Italian and German unity. But both countries belonged to Europe, whether they liked it or not. The position of a great European Power won by Peter and consolidated by Catherine and Alexander I could not be renounced, any more than Britain could remain for ever isolated, splendidly or otherwise, from the restless Continent.

It is sometimes said, or used to be said, that Russia is less a European than an Asiatic country. That is merely the propaganda of people who want to see Russia excluded from participation in the councils of Europe. They might as well call Spain, for instance, an African country, since Spain under the Moors, like Russia under the Tartars, did for a time cease to form part of Europe, and Moors and Tartars left some enduring traces behind them in each case. Race and civilization as well as geographical situation make Russia European. Yet it is undeniable that nations on the periphery of the Continent have a different outlook from those situated like France or Germany. Centrifugal influences are sure to be stronger. Intellectually, the Russian tendency away from Europe during the nineteenth century expressed itself in the Slavophil movement. Politically, it took the form of the traditional anti-Turkish policy of Tsarism and of penetration and conquest in Asia. If the Continental balance of power operated to prevent a threat developing to British security, the same principle also protected Russia, though her vulnerable western frontier compelled her to enter into alliances which Britain could afford to do without. As for Russia in the part of Continental tyrant, that was a fantasy. There never was a single sign that she aspired to the position. Leaving aside the question of Turkey, a special one, her attitude to Europe was not aggressive but consistently defensive. Then, as before and since, British and Russian interests on the Continent ran along parallel lines. During the century there were moments, but unfortunately only moments, when the truth became clearly visible.

In so far as there was any sense in the opposition of "Russia" to "Europe," it was largely a matter of comparative age. Russia was younger than the other great European nations, junior perhaps by two or three hundred years to France and England. Had Peter the Great

lived in the time of Louis XI or Henry VII instead of in that of Fénelon and Addison, he would have aroused less astonishment; and the standards of behaviour at the court of the Empress Catherine would not have seemed so scandalous to the contemporaries of Catherine de' Medici or Queen Elizabeth. The great expansion of Russia since the seventeenth century, the victory over Napoleon, the transformation of the barbarous state to which Peter succeeded as ruler into the mighty empire that Alexander I left at his death, filled Russians with confidence in the mission of their country and pride in its leadership among the Powers of Europe. But the transformation had been too sudden, the acceptance of Western ideas too uncritical, of Western fashions too indiscriminating; the contrast between the brilliant civilization of St. Petersburg and the backwardness of the people as a whole was too stark. In their reaction against the impact of the West, the Slavophiles fell into absurd exaggeration. They stuffed their trousers into their boots, wore their shirts with the collar fastened at the side, and loudly proclaimed the superiority of Holy Russia to degenerate Europe. From the West came luxury, egotism, violence and class hatred. In Russia were to be found social harmony, true morality and a liberty more real than that propagated by the false liberalism of London and Paris. There was only one source of evil, the poison introduced by Peter and kept circulating by the alien bureaucracy of his hateful capital. The squalor and poverty of Russian life, the ignorance and sloth of the peasantry were preferable to the spiritual darkness and the arrogance of Europe. The intellectuals of Moscow had enthusiastic allies in the Orthodox clergy. Lice, as the Sergievsky monks told the Reverend William Palmer, taught men to cultivate the Christian virtues.

There were symptoms of immaturity. Russians were rather crude and unsure of themselves compared to western Europeans. But they possessed some of the virtues as well as defects of youth, a certain simplicity and spontaneity that the West had lost. Alexander Herzen, one of the early Russian intelligentsia, living as an exile in England in the middle of the century, complains of the narrow and self-satisfied mentality of people in the West: "The Western European is not normal; he is moulting. . . . Persons of culture are not common among us, but their culture is richer, wider in its scope, free from hedges and barriers." It was the qualities of freshness and open-mindedness that Herzen found lacking in the West which, twenty or thirty years later when Russian literature became known abroad, constituted its charm to the Western public.

If the Russians were Europeans they were Europeans with a difference. Even between them and their neighbours and cousins, the Poles, the dissimilarity was great, and the further west one went the greater the dissimilarity. There were factors besides the comparative level of civilization that divided them from other European peoples. Most important, probably, of all was the circumstance that Russians derived their religion from Constantinople and not from Rome, and had

therefore never formed part of the international society of the Middle Ages, whose basis was the Catholic Church and medium of communication the Latin language. Russia missed the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. Moreover, from various causes she possessed peculiar institutions like the village commune (the *Mir*) and a distinctive political tradition. The Slavophiles were not alone in perceiving a gulf between their country and Europe, nor had they been the first to draw attention to it. Their opponents, the Westerners, who avidly assimilated every new idea coming out of France, England and Germany, were not content simply that Russia should be a faithful copy of the West. Western socialism, for instance, when transplanted to the banks of the Neva became something quite new. Marxian influence was strong in the last quarter of the century, but Russian Marxism developed in its own way and produced results without parallel in other countries. The Communist state set up by Lenin on the ruins of the Tsarist empire, in spite of Western inspiration and, we might say, in spite of Lenin himself, was as Russian as its predecessor; even more so in some ways. Did the transfer of the seat of government from the city of Peter back to the old capital, though dictated by practical reasons, not have a kind of symbolical significance? Paradoxically, the Revolution of November, 1917, which was to begin the destruction of world capitalism and wipe off the map the frontier separating backward Russia from the industrial West, led to a period of Russian isolation from Europe more complete than any for three hundred years.

An English observer studying Russian conditions in the eighteenth-seventies came to the conclusion that the Slavophiles were not, perhaps, entirely absurd in believing there to be more social justice in Russia than in Victorian England. The absolute rule of the Tsar and the arbitrary officialdom through which it was exercised were consistent with a certain amount of real equality among his subjects. It was a paternal despotism that pressed down upon all ranks of society alike, and had not much more respect for the rights of nobleman than of peasant. Class differences were outwardly obtrusive, but, since political parties did not exist to further the interests of the classes, ill-feeling between them was latent rather than conscious as in the West. There was a land-owning gentry but no aristocratic caste. There were business and professional men without a middle class properly speaking. Industrialization had not gone far enough till the last years of the century to create an urban proletariat. The great majority of the population lived in village communities that in fact practised an advanced form of democratic self-government. Even as a serf before the Emancipation, the Russian peasant might be considered in some ways better off than the landless agricultural labourer of England.

It is true that the differences between Russia and the rest of Europe were in process of being ironed out. The Tsarist autocracy seemed to be developing at the end into a constitutional monarchy on Western lines, when, by one of those extraordinary leaps characteristic of Russian history, it was transformed into a state as far in advance of the West, at

least in pattern if not performance, as it had previously been behind, yet as authoritarian and as alien from Western democracy as ever. The French Revolution, however, proved that the most violent upheaval cannot break the continuity of a nation's life. Many indications show the old Russia to have been the ancestor of the new. The Mir as obviously was the prototype of the collective farm of present-day Russia as the Tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, served as a model for the OGPU.

Do national characteristics survive a revolution? Some of them no doubt. "We Russians," said a Tsarist statesman, "lack the cement of hypocrisy." The saying throws much light on pre-Communist Russia, perhaps too on the Soviet Union. And let us admit that it was a lack that distinguished Russians from Victorian Englishmen more sharply than from their contemporaries in any other country. For hypocrisy, though an unlovely attribute, is a social virtue. The constraint necessary to social life does not come naturally to human beings and requires a good deal of pretence as well as self-discipline and toleration; more respectable qualities that have also been considered as peculiarly British, but not typically Russian. It may be that the very contrast between the British and Russian temperaments made for a certain sympathy between them as individuals. We are often attracted by opposite qualities to our own in others, and in a sense the characters of the two peoples might be said to be complementary, just as the two nations were economically and even, despite constant rivalry, politically complementary. But the sympathy of opposites does not always imply comprehension. It could scarcely be maintained that Englishmen and Russians were, or are, constitutionally adapted to understand one another. The clash between the cold common-sense of Castlereagh and the nebulous enthusiasm of the Emperor Alexander might provide an example of national incompatibility, were it not that the first was an Irishman and the second was more German by blood than Russian. Besides, it would be an error to think that the relations between states depend to any great extent on the likes and dislikes of individuals, at least where personal contact has been so scanty as between Russians and ourselves. Nor did economic interest, especially in the nineteenth century, avail against mutual hostility caused by diplomatic antagonism.

Individual Englishmen might be popular enough in Russia. Even after the Crimean War it was remarked that there was little personal resentment against them. The ideas of a Bentham, or a Buckle, or a Herbert Spencer might be welcomed and discussed, English poets and novelists, like Scott, Byron, Dickens, and George Eliot, admired and imitated. But the English as a nation were calculating, narrow-minded materialists, repugnant to the broad Slavonic nature. To the ordinary Englishman of the early Victorian age, on the other hand, the Russians were something better than savages and worse than civilized men, alarming because of their numbers, their martial habits and their blind submission to their rulers. Fortunately this formidable people had its weaknesses; corruption was universal, and its superstition and oriental apathy might keep it from being a danger to more advanced nations.

Furthermore, had Sir Roderick Murchison, the President of the Geological Society of London, not reported Russia to be deficient in mineral resources, above all in coal? Without the raw materials essential for manufacturing greatness, with harbours blocked by ice for half the year and an unprogressive agricultural population, Russia could never be an industrial and commercial rival of Britain, the natural workshop and market of the whole world.

Later in the century the military power of the Tsarist empire aroused somewhat less anxiety, but confidence in the willingness of other countries, including Russia, to submit indefinitely to the economic domination of Britain began to decline. The significance of the fateful changes that were being prepared under the surface of slumbering Russia, of the intellectual ferment that was to result in such an extraordinary convulsion in the next century, was lost on the Victorian public, with its invincible faith in the British doctrine of free trade and the principles of political liberty preached at Westminster. British opinion was quick to be generously indignant at the tyranny of the Tsars, but slow to recognize the immense problems that confronted them, the real efforts made, particularly by Alexander II, to solve these problems and the analogy presented by British difficulties in India, South Africa, or Ireland. Nor was there adequate appreciation of the indispensable part which the Tsarist autocracy performed in a world where the leadership of Britain brought her so much glory and profit. It would have been impossible, without a despotic government, for the vast territories and multifarious, illiterate peoples of the Russian Empire to be welded into a coherent political unit, and its disintegration would in no way have suited British interests. We might even say that, if the Russian Empire had not existed, England would have had to invent it, for the freedom and prosperity enjoyed by Victorian Britain were dependent not only on the virtues of the British race and the strength of the Queen's navy, but also on a peaceful Europe and Asia of which the empire of the Tsars was an essential element.

### CHAPTER III

## THE EASTERN QUESTION (1821—1878)

### § 1. *Greek independence*

ON March 19, 1821, a courier arrived at the Austrian town of Laibach, where a conference of the Powers of Europe was in session, with a momentous dispatch for the Emperor of Russia. A fortnight previously, he read, Prince Alexander Ipsilanti, a member of a Greek family of Constantinople and a general in the Russian Army, had crossed the river Pruth into Turkish territory with a few companions, calling upon the Christian subjects of the Sultan to rise against their Moslem masters in the name of the Russian Tsar. It was the beginning of the Greek revolt

against Turkey, that led to the creation of an independent kingdom of Greece and produced, or rather revived, the most famous diplomatic imbroglio in the history of modern Europe. the Eastern Question. For nearly a hundred years this was the eternal preoccupation of Foreign Ministers, subsiding for a time only to erupt in a fresh crisis more harassing than ever. It caused a long series of collisions between Britain and Russia, including one war, the Crimean War, the sole occasion on which the two countries have been directly engaged in hostilities against each other. After the Congress of Berlin in 1878, indeed, the Eastern Question assumed a new form and ceased virtually to monopolize Anglo-Russian relations. Middle and Far Eastern problems emerged and overshadowed the original, properly Near Eastern, one. The details of the Eastern Question, during its heyday in the fifty years preceding the Berlin Congress, are recondite and complex; the issues, since the final dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, are obsolete; but the consequences are not yet exhausted.

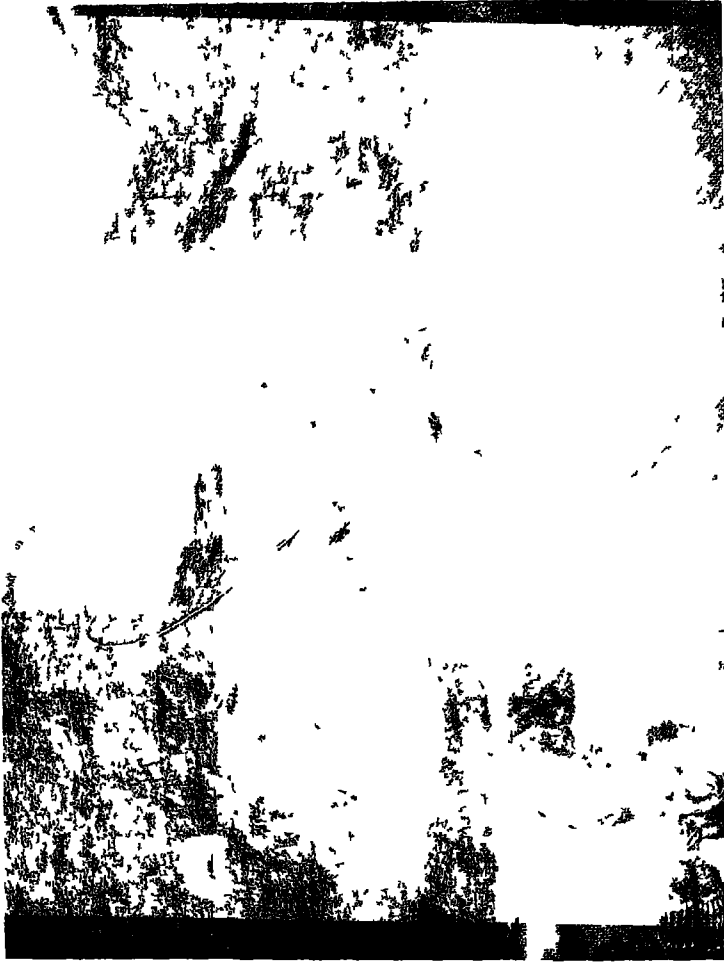
At the outbreak of the Greek revolt the Turks had been for four hundred years camped on the soil of Europe, a horde of alien conquerors. Their manners, their methods of government and their Moslem creed constituted an unsurmountable barrier between them and neighbouring European states, on the one hand, and the Greek Orthodox populations over whom they ruled, on the other. For almost three out of those four hundred years they had been the terror of Christendom. In the sixteenth century Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent had pushed his conquests to the walls of Vienna, and, although the Ottoman Empire thereafter began to decline in vigour, Vienna was again besieged by a Turkish army at the close of the seventeenth century, when it was only saved by the timely help of the Polish king, John Sobieski. During the succeeding century the Turks were gradually beaten back towards Asia; but at the beginning of the nineteenth they were still masters, or overlords, of all south-eastern Europe, as well as of Asia Minor, Syria, Iraq, Arabia, Egypt and the whole north African coast. Russia had by this time taken the place, once held by Austria, of opponent-in-chief of the Ottomans and supporter-in-chief of the Christian subjects of the Sultan. Hereditary enmity, imperialist ambition, economic interest, religious sentiment, racial and humanitarian sympathy, everything combined to impel the Russians to the south, towards Constantinople and the Straits. But three of the great European Powers were not disposed to allow this vital region to fall into Russian hands, or under Russian control. It was no coincidence that the three Powers were all Mediterranean states, and the same that had united against Alexander at the Congress of Vienna: Austria, France and Britain. Austria, unlike France and Britain and like Russia, had a common frontier with the Ottoman Empire. Such motives, however, as she had to augment her dominions at Turkish expense were less strong than her anxiety to prevent the Tsar adding to his. Moreover, the Austrians were fully occupied elsewhere. As for France and Britain, they both had reasons for upholding Turkish territorial integrity. The French had a traditional friendship with the



*Unofficial portrait of the British Monarch*

Nicholas I, Emperor of Russia





*By Courtesy of The Marquis of Aberdeen*

George, 4th Earl of Aberdeen

Turks, which did not, it is true, exclude ideas of expansion on the shores of the Mediterranean in the event of any calamity overtaking their friends. But French policy was fitful, and French sea-power far inferior to British. The principal part, therefore, in opposing Russian designs against the Sultan was assumed by Britain.

The British had for the first time come to take a pronounced interest in the Ottoman Empire during the late war with France. They already held Gibraltar. At the peace they gained Malta and the Ionian Islands, off the west coast of Greece, thus advancing from the western to the central Mediterranean. And they were determined to exercise maritime supremacy over all that sea. For this purpose, since the occupation of mainland territory by themselves would not be convenient, they had to ensure as far as possible that the states commanding the Mediterranean sea-ways should be weak and dependent on British good will. The huge, rotten Turkish Empire, continually growing feebler under Russian pressure, and therefore the more open to British influence, occupied all the most important points in respect of commerce and strategy in the eastern Mediterranean, from the Dardanelles to the isthmus of Suez. There was as yet no Suez Canal, but trade routes passed through Egypt to the Red Sea and led from the Persian Gulf to Syrian ports. Nor did Englishmen forget that in the Egyptian campaign of 1801 two thousand Indian sepoy had been sent by way of the Red Sea to reinforce a British army against the French. If the city of Constantinople appeared vital, it was not merely for its own sake and that of the Straits which it dominated, but still more because it was the capital of an empire stretching from the Danube to the Indian Ocean. And the ruler of this empire was also the spiritual head of Islam, Caliph as well as Ottoman Sultan. As Britain, by her conquests in India, began to rule over an increasing number of Moslems, it became opportune to have regard to their religious susceptibilities. Thus, on a number of grounds, British interests were identified with the defence of the Ottoman Empire. British diplomacy and, if necessary, British warships and troops, must seek to prolong its life, or, if the worst came to the worst, take care that the estate should not descend to too rich an heir.

The news of the Greek revolt placed the Tsar in an embarrassing situation, torn as he was between his fear of revolutions, his desire for peace and his hatred of the Turks. The first two emotions were stronger than the last. He disavowed and cashiered Ipsilanti. But the insurrection, suppressed in what is now Roumania, spread to all parts of Greece proper, inhabited that is by people Greek by race as well as religion. Frightful barbarities were committed on both sides. The Greek clergy proclaimed a war of extermination against the infidel, and thousands of Moslems were massacred in the Morea. The Turks retaliated with their customary atrocities. Sultan Mahmoud decided to teach his despised and turbulent Christian subjects a lesson. The representative of the whole Orthodox population of the Empire, Slavs, Roumanians and Greeks, was the Patriarch of Constantinople, an official nominee of the Turkish government. In order to terrorize the

ensured the liberation of Greece, and eventually of the other Christian nations of the Balkan peninsula. Canning, perhaps fortunately for his reputation, had died just before it was fought, and his colleagues in the government, who disliked his anti-Turkish policy, were thrown into utter confusion by the news. Wellington, a staunch pro-Turk, became Prime Minister. The King's Speech at the opening of Parliament referred to Navarino as an untoward event, which his Majesty lamented should have disturbed relations with an ancient ally. The Opposition, however, and the public in general regarded the "untoward event" as a great victory; and apologetic words could not give back to the Sultan his navy, or prevent the British government finding itself committed to a line of action towards Turkey that ran counter to its most cherished convictions and prejudices. As for the "ancient ally", he was quite comprehensibly overcome by rage and fear; rage at the destruction of his fleet by his so-called friends; and fear that he was now abandoned by them to the mercy of his traditional enemy. Under the influence of these feelings he made certain of his own humiliation by offering sufficient provocation to give the Tsar the opportunity he waited for. The Russian armies marched, and, after a stout resistance by the Turks, peace was dictated to the Sultan at Adrianople. The first round in the Eastern Question had gone to Nicholas.

In the eyes of the Christian peoples of Turkey and of the Russians, whose own gains were more modest than could have been easily enforced, the Treaty of Adrianople came as a glorious end to a just war. The Wellington government did not conceal its chagrin. To apprehension over the Turkish collapse was added mortification at the Tsar's success in obtaining all the credit of winning freedom for the Greeks. As a matter of fact, Wellington was unduly pessimistic in believing the Turkish Empire to be fatally wounded. He under-estimated Turkish tenacity and exaggerated Russian aggressiveness. For Russian ministers had changed their minds about Turkey. Their views were no longer those of the predatory Empress Catherine II and her contemporaries. Ideas of expelling the Moslems from Europe, and planting the cross once more on the dome of St. Sophia, were out of date. It sufficed for Russia to control, without occupying or possessing, the Straits. Constantinople was safer in Turkish than in other hands. A weak Ottoman Empire, subservient to Russia, would suit Russian interests better than a number of succession states, jealous of their independence and open to Austrian and British intrigue. This change of outlook manifested itself before long in a dramatic fashion. The ambition of Mehemet Ali and his warlike son, Ibrahim Pasha, provided the occasion.

MeheMET Ali had done good work for the Sultan during the Greek war. It was not his fault, or Ibrahim's, that the great Powers had stepped in and spoilt everything. He expected as a reward to be invested with the governorship of Syria, a most desirable country for the ruler of Egypt to acquire. The Sultan refused. Thereupon Mehemet Ali sent Ibrahim to take Syria by force. Ibrahim's success was startling. He defeated several Turkish armies in quick succession, advanced into

Asia Minor, where he routed another, the last, army of the Sultan, and approached the capital. The Sultan had, before the final disaster, applied to Britain and France to curb the Egyptians. They would not listen. Now in his extremity the miserable Mahmoud turned to Russia. "A drowning man", he said, "will grasp at a serpent". The serpent was only too pleased to help. Russian troops were landed at the Bosphorus, and a collision between them and the army of Ibrahim seemed imminent. At this, Britain and France, anxious as always not to allow isolated action by the Tsar, put urgent pressure on the Sultan to come to terms with the Egyptians; and a convention was signed giving Mehmet Ali what he wanted. Although still nominally a vassal of the Ottoman Sultan, he became the virtually independent sovereign of Syria, in addition to Egypt and Crete. Thus, only a year after the treaty had been concluded establishing the kingdom of Greece, the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was again violated; and this time as before with the connivance of the Western Powers, which professed to be its protectors. The question now arose, what would the Tsar's price be for the service he had rendered? The price proved to be an alliance of mutual defence between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. Nicholas had triumphed for the second time.

The Russo-Turkish alliance was embodied in the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi, a name whose sepulchral sound sent a chill down the spines of British and French statesmen for many years. If Adrianople had been unpleasant, this seemed far worse. There was excitement, amounting to panic, in London and Paris. The Turkish Empire, what was left of it, would henceforth be nothing but a Russian protectorate. Or, more probably, Unkiar-Skelessi would be the first step towards its early and complete disintegration. The dream of Catherine the Great appeared on the point of realization. These dark prognostications were wide of the mark. Nicholas contented himself with a diplomatic victory over the Western Powers, undermining their influence at Constantinople. The provisions of Unkiar-Skelessi were never put into effect, and some time afterwards it was superseded with Russian consent. Yet diplomatic victories are apt to be expensive. The Franco-British reply was slow in coming; but it came ultimately in the form of the Crimean War.

## × § 2. *The Crimean War*

In the meantime a long lull occurred in the Eastern Question, broken only by a renewal of hostilities between Sultan Mahmoud and Mehmet Ali and by a consequent dispute that ranged France against the other great Powers. The French, ever since Napoleon's Egyptian expedition, had been particularly interested in that country. They were the patrons of Mehmet Ali, whose army had been organized by French officers, and their share in the Battle of Navarino had not broken the connection. In Syria and Palestine France had also interests of great antiquity.

She hoped, by supporting the Egyptian ruler, to find a useful ally against both Russian and British Mediterranean pretensions. For their part, the British looked coldly on Mehemet Ali and the Arab empire he was trying to build up. It was too efficient and too French, and his totalitarian commercial system interfered with British trade. Britain had chased the French once out of Egypt and was prepared to do the same again. When the Turks, therefore, rashly attacked Ibrahim and were beaten as disastrously as before, Britain agreed with Russia in taking the Turkish side, while France took the Egyptian. Inevitably, the French, faced with a combination of all the other Powers in favour of Turkey, had to give way, after threatening war and with the greatest indignation; and Mehemet Ali was compelled to disgorge Syria. The principal part in coercing the Egyptians on this occasion was played by Britain, and the prestige attaching to the successful settlement of the Turco-Egyptian question went to her and to Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary. Nicholas kept in the background. His self-effacement and moderation were exemplary. Far from making use of his treaty rights with Turkey for the aggrandizement of Russia, he showed himself as ready as England not only to preserve Turkish sovereignty but even to strengthen his ancestral foe. He did more: he abandoned voluntarily the special and advantageous position that Russian diplomacy had secured by the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi at Constantinople.

No doubt, the motives of the Tsar were not purely benevolent. During the eighteen-thirties the great European states tended to fall into two groups, Britain and France, the two constitutional kingdoms, in one; Russia, Austria and Prussia, the three absolute monarchies, in the other. Each of the groups had certain interests in common, apart from ideological sympathy. But there were serious differences also within the groups. France and Britain were divided on Egypt; Austria and Russia over the Balkans; Austria and Prussia about Germany. It was realized in St. Petersburg that the advantages gained at Unkiar-Skelessi were too great not to be regarded with dangerous envy by the other Powers. If Russia pursued an exclusive and grasping policy towards Turkey, the result would be to arouse the permanent antagonism of British and French and to endanger good relations with Austria, which the Tsar desired to maintain. The wealth, stability and power of England impressed him. By acting with her in Turkey he might win English support against those revolutionary movements that he feared and convert her to the cause of European law and order. Moreover, he was convinced that no essential cleavage of interests existed between Russia and England. It suited both of them, for the time at least, to keep the Ottoman Empire in being. Would not Russia, because of geographical proximity and through the Orthodox Church, be able to exercise a preponderant influence at Constantinople without any invidious treaty privileges? And supposing, what was very probable, that the Ottoman Empire could not for long be preserved, that the sick man of Europe at last expired, why should Russia and England

not be able to agree about the disposal of the deceased's effects? They were ample enough to satisfy both countries. Nicholas respected the England of Queen Victoria, as he detested the bourgeois France of King Louis Philippe. Nothing could, in any case, please him more than to see the two liberal Powers quarrel with each other. The affair of Mehemet Ali appeared doubly welcome, since it could be used to draw England and Russia together and also to weaken the Franco-British *entente*. The Tsar set himself assiduously to cultivate friendship with the English, and with some success, especially when the Conservative government of Peel came into power in Britain and Aberdeen replaced Palmerston as Foreign Secretary. He visited England himself and made a favourable impression on the young Queen and her ministers. "Really", wrote Victoria, in her ingenuous way, from Windsor, "it seems like a dream when I think that we breakfast and walk with this greatest of all earthly potentates." But British policy in the Victorian era was not directed by the sovereign, nor for long, until its latter part, by a Conservative ministry.

In the previous century the Whigs had been pro-Russian and anti-Turkish, the Tories the reverse. These traditional sentiments revived at the period of the Greek War of Independence. Canning's Treaty of London was distasteful to the Tory back-benchers and most of the Cabinet; while the Whigs were enthusiastic about the Battle of Navarino. After the Reform Act the Whigs, or Liberals as they began to call themselves, forgot their anti-Turkish feelings in distrust of the Tsar; and the Tories, now Conservatives, inclined, rather tepidly, to Russia. The Tsarist Empire was certainly the foremost conservative influence in Europe. Nicholas towered over contemporary monarchs in apparently unassailable might and self-confidence. Liberals loathed him as the very symbol of tyranny. And Liberals, or rather their Whig leaders, ruled Britain almost as absolutely as Nicholas Russia. It was the golden age of middle-class Liberalism, sure of its own superior rectitude and enlightenment and eager to further the cause of freedom and progress by precept and encouragement, more particularly by precept, in every part of the world. In Poland, for instance, or other countries writhing under the brutality of the "monster Nicholas", the "sanguinary despot of St. Petersburg", as orators in the House of Commons called him. Significantly, it was just after the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi that this kind of vituperation began to be commonly addressed to the Russian monarch. There was genuine sympathy for the Poles. But also more than a tinge of jealousy on account of Russian triumphs in the Eastern Question. From this time a large section of the British public became violently anti-Russian. More violently than reasonably, for abuse of the Tsar would not benefit anyone, and few had any real knowledge of conditions in eastern Europe. The Poles, and later the Hungarians, were pictured as noble patriots struggling against a cruel oppressor, instead of, what was as near, or nearer, the truth, selfish feudal aristocrats employing patriotic catchwords in order to maintain their own privileges at the expense of a wretched,

and partly alien, peasantry. The reign of Nicholas I might be an era of frosty repression, within Russia and without. But there is another side to it. The Iron Tsar, stern, illiberal and not without grandeur, was far from being a rapacious conqueror, or, except towards Turkey, where he had much excuse, a bad neighbour. We are in a better position today than the optimistic Victorians to appreciate the value of the long period of European tranquillity that followed the Congress of Vienna. Much of the credit must be given to Metternich and, after him, to the Emperor Nicholas. The causes of freedom and progress, it must be owned, conduced to war rather than peace.

For the greater part of Nicholas' reign Palmerston remained at the Foreign Office. He believed in the old Tory policy of defending Turkish integrity, and combined the doctrine of national egotism handed down to him by Canning with the anti-Russian sentiment of the Liberals. Palmerston's own Liberalism was superficial, but he well knew the advantage of professing popular views. Moreover, he had a peculiar talent for quarrelling with everyone who crossed his path. It is not surprising that, with public opinion in the state it was and Palmerston in power, the chance of reconciliation between Britain and Russia afforded by their common action against Mehemet Ali was lost. The events of the Year of Revolutions, 1848, made matters worse. Righteous anger rose in British hearts at the measures taken to suppress revolutionary uprisings in Europe, and especially by Austrian harshness, seconded by the Tsar, in dealing with the rebellious Hungarians. The Eastern Question, however, slumbered; and there seemed to be nothing at first in a squabble between Latin and Greek ecclesiastics over the Holy Places in Palestine to worry about. But the squabble grew into a controversy between France and Russia, the controversy between France and Russia into an issue between Russia and Turkey, and this into a European crisis of the first magnitude.

It was France who, moved by domestic reasons and by the desire to recover some of her lost prestige in the Levant rather than out of any excessive interest in the Latin monks, raised the matter from the ecclesiastical plane to that of international politics. Russia replied by taking the part of the Orthodox churchmen. The Ottoman government temporized as usual, in its anxiety to placate the interfering foreigners without diminishing its own authority. Nicholas then made his first blunder. Irritated by the French initiative and the long drawn-out negotiations, he resolved to seize the opportunity to impose his will on the Turks by force. So he mobilized his army and sent a special envoy with an ultimatum to Constantinople, requiring the Sultan to enter into a formal convention for the protection of the Orthodox Church in his dominions. The Russian demand, and the peremptory manner in which it was presented, frightened the Turks and disquieted the ambassadors of the great Powers, to whom they turned for advice. The terms of the proposed convention seemed to be much wider than anything called for by the controversy over the Holy Places. An unlimited power of intervention on behalf of the Christians in Turkey

would be conferred, or so the Turks argued, on Russia. Such a power the Sultan refused to concede and the Powers contemplated with hardly more favour. Then Nicholas made his second blunder. He withdrew his representatives from Constantinople and ordered his troops to occupy the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, technically Turkish provinces, but in fact autonomous territories under Russian protection. A Russian army was, therefore, concentrated along the lower Danube, a state of affairs that menaced Turkey and annoyed Austria, to whom free passage down the river was important. The Concert of Europe answered the Russian advance by protests, military counter-preparations and advice to the Turks not to offer provocation to the Tsar. The ambassadors of the four great Powers met at Vienna under the presidency of the Austrian Chancellor, with the purpose of contriving an amicable solution of the Russo-Turkish difference. They proposed a settlement, which became known as the Vienna Note. It was accepted by Russia and rejected by Turkey.

The crucial moment now arrived. The matters in dispute between Russia and Turkey were hypothetical rather than actual, a question of words more than realities, and it is the ordinary business of diplomacy to settle a question of that kind by a suitable formula. Wars are not produced by niceties of phraseology, if the will to peace is present. But the will to peace was lacking. On one side stood an inflexible autocrat, conscious of his own isolation and willing to compromise, if only he could do so without loss of prestige. On the other side a feeble, fanatical government, encouraged by the moral to hope for the material support of the Powers, and astute enough to see that it held some good cards and by skilful play might compel them to intervene. Watching the scene were the four Powers. Prussia, the least interested, was not prepared to give anything but verbal assistance to the Turks. Austria was timid, unfriendly to the Russians, but pacific. France, now under Napoleon III, was a dubious quantity, if not desirous of war at least ready for it, provided she did not have to fight alone. The British government was divided, but public opinion was swinging it more and more towards war with Russia. The Concert had agreed on the Vienna Note as a proper solution of the issue. The Tsar had accepted it. Were the Turks to be allowed to reopen the whole question? Delay could not fail to be dangerous, for tempers were rising. It was imperative that the four Powers should remain united and that they should decide quickly. They drifted apart and procrastinated. The Turks saw that their chance had come, declared war on Russia and, crossing the Danube, began hostilities. The Russians kept to the defensive. But thenceforward hope of averting a great war became slight. Britain and France had by now involved themselves too far on the Turkish side to draw back. Inflammatory incidents were bound to occur. A naval battle between Russians and Turks at Sinope, in which the Turks were worsted and which English newspapers absurdly wrote up as a cold-blooded massacre, created an immense effect. British and French warships received instructions to pass through the Bosphorus into the



and partly alien, peasantry. The reign of Nicholas I might be an era of frosty repression, within Russia and without. But there is another side to it. The Iron Tsar, stern, illiberal and not without grandeur, was far from being a rapacious conqueror, or, except towards Turkey, where he had much excuse, a bad neighbour. We are in a better position today than the optimistic Victorians to appreciate the value of the long period of European tranquillity that followed the Congress of Vienna. Much of the credit must be given to Metternich and, after him, to the Emperor Nicholas. The causes of freedom and progress, it must be owned, conduced to war rather than peace.

For the greater part of Nicholas' reign Palmerston remained at the Foreign Office. He believed in the old Tory policy of defending Turkish integrity, and combined the doctrine of national egotism handed down to him by Canning with the anti-Russian sentiment of the Liberals. Palmerston's own Liberalism was superficial, but he well knew the advantage of professing popular views. Moreover, he had a peculiar talent for quarrelling with everyone who crossed his path. It is not surprising that, with public opinion in the state it was and Palmerston in power, the chance of reconciliation between Britain and Russia afforded by their common action against Mehemet Ali was lost. The events of the Year of Revolutions, 1848, made matters worse. Righteous anger rose in British hearts at the measures taken to suppress revolutionary uprisings in Europe, and especially by Austrian harshness, seconded by the Tsar, in dealing with the rebellious Hungarians. The Eastern Question, however, slumbered; and there seemed to be nothing at first in a squabble between Latin and Greek ecclesiastics over the Holy Places in Palestine to worry about. But the squabble grew into a controversy between France and Russia, the controversy between France and Russia into an issue between Russia and Turkey, and this into a European crisis of the first magnitude.

It was France who, moved by domestic reasons and by the desire to recover some of her lost prestige in the Levant rather than out of any excessive interest in the Latin monks, raised the matter from the ecclesiastical plane to that of international politics. Russia replied by taking the part of the Orthodox churchmen. The Ottoman government temporized as usual, in its anxiety to placate the interfering foreigners without diminishing its own authority. Nicholas then made his first blunder. Irritated by the French initiative and the long drawn-out negotiations, he resolved to seize the opportunity to impose his will on the Turks by force. So he mobilized his army and sent a special envoy with an ultimatum to Constantinople, requiring the Sultan to enter into a formal convention for the protection of the Orthodox Church in his dominions. The Russian demand, and the peremptory manner in which it was presented, frightened the Turks and disquieted the ambassadors of the great Powers, to whom they turned for advice. The terms of the proposed convention seemed to be much wider than anything called for by the controversy over the Holy Places. An unlimited power of intervention on behalf of the Christians in Turkey

would be conferred, or so the Turks argued, on Russia. Such a power the Sultan refused to concede and the Powers contemplated with hardly more favour. Then Nicholas made his second blunder. He withdrew his representatives from Constantinople and ordered his troops to occupy the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, technically Turkish provinces, but in fact autonomous territories under Russian protection. A Russian army was, therefore, concentrated along the lower Danube, a state of affairs that menaced Turkey and annoyed Austria, to whom free passage down the river was important. The Concert of Europe answered the Russian advance by protests, military counter-preparations and advice to the Turks not to offer provocation to the Tsar. The ambassadors of the four great Powers met at Vienna under the presidency of the Austrian Chancellor, with the purpose of contriving an amicable solution of the Russo-Turkish difference. They proposed a settlement, which became known as the Vienna Note. It was accepted by Russia and rejected by Turkey.

The crucial moment now arrived. The matters in dispute between Russia and Turkey were hypothetical rather than actual, a question of words more than realities, and it is the ordinary business of diplomacy to settle a question of that kind by a suitable formula. Wars are not produced by niceties of phraseology, if the will to peace is present. But the will to peace was lacking. On one side stood an inflexible autocrat, conscious of his own isolation and willing to compromise, if only he could do so without loss of prestige. On the other side a feeble, fanatical government, encouraged by the moral to hope for the material support of the Powers, and astute enough to see that it held some good cards and by skilful play might compel them to intervene. Watching the scene were the four Powers. Prussia, the least interested, was not prepared to give anything but verbal assistance to the Turks. Austria was timid, unfriendly to the Russians, but pacific. France, now under Napoleon III, was a dubious quantity, if not desirous of war at least ready for it, provided she did not have to fight alone. The British government was divided, but public opinion was swinging it more and more towards war with Russia. The Concert had agreed on the Vienna Note as a proper solution of the issue. The Tsar had accepted it. Were the Turks to be allowed to reopen the whole question? Delay could not fail to be dangerous, for tempers were rising. It was imperative that the four Powers should remain united and that they should decide quickly. They drifted apart and procrastinated. The Turks saw that their chance had come, declared war on Russia and, crossing the Danube, began hostilities. The Russians kept to the defensive. But thenceforward hope of averting a great war became slight. Britain and France had by now involved themselves too far on the Turkish side to draw back. Inflammatory incidents were bound to occur. A naval battle between Russians and Turks at Sinope, in which the Turks were worsted and which English newspapers absurdly wrote up as a cold-blooded massacre, created an immense effect. British and French warships received instructions to pass through the Bosphorus into the

Black Sea. Yet peace still hung by a thread ; not until six months after the Turkish declaration did Britain and France too declare war on Russia. Prussia remained neutral ; Austria, under arms but non-belligerent, threatened the Russian flank.

The responsibility for this most unnecessary war rested in the first place upon the Emperor Nicholas personally. By his overbearing ultimatum to the Turkish government and his precipitate occupation of the Principalities, he led his country, against the advice of his ministers, into a false position and a humiliating defeat. All the advantages gained by a vigorous and prudent foreign policy in the previous thirty years of his reign were thrown away. And without good reason, since, if the Turks had submitted to his demands, he would not have been much further forward. But the last thing the Tsar, though happy enough to fight the Turks, expected or wanted was war with England and France. They, too, were responsible. They were not bound by treaty to intervene on behalf of Turkey. Up to the very end a settlement could have been reached if they had chosen to restrain the Turks, instead of resolving on war for a cause as hopeless in the long run as it was worthless. It is true that one or two men in England, even if without success, used all their endeavours to preserve peace ; and especially the Prime Minister, who hated war in itself and shared the opinions of the Tsar about the Ottoman Empire.

It was a Liberal historian who called Aberdeen the best Foreign Secretary of the nineteenth century. He was patient, conciliatory, sagacious, everything, indeed, that Palmerston was not, with a better understanding of European politics than any other contemporary British statesman. Unfortunately, as Prime Minister he failed ; partly because of a lack of force in his character ; partly, too, because of his difficult position as the Conservative head of a coalition government dominated by the Liberals. Palmerston and the Whig leaders in the Cabinet intrigued against the Prime Minister's pacific policy, and, as public opinion became increasingly pro-Turkish, the war party in the government grew more powerful, until Aberdeen, in spite of himself, was carried away by the flood. Popular sentiment, especially after the battle of Sinope, grew passionately excited against Russia. Fat and complacent after forty years of peace and accumulating wealth, the country gave itself up to a lust for blood, and for revenge against the monarch who had long thwarted British aims and flouted British ideals. Abuse was showered on Aberdeen and the few who thought like him. They included the Prince Consort, for he also was well-informed and wise, and royalty did not then receive the deferential treatment of a later and more democratic age. The public intoxication became such that crowds of Londoners, attracted by rumour, gathered at Tower Hill to see the Prime Minister and the Prince Consort committed to the Tower for high treason. Infatuation for the victim equalled hatred of the bully and his British accomplices. The Turks, detested at the time of Navarino as torturers of Greek Christians, now earned praise in clubs, drawing-rooms and even pulpits : a brave, simple

people, defending their faith and fatherland against a gigantic aggressor. Yet the Turks had not changed, except that they had learned sufficient discretion to let themselves be guided by the advice of a diplomatist of consummate skill and experience. Stratford Canning, the British ambassador at Constantinople, was endowed with a strong will, much self-esteem and an implacable hostility to the Russian emperor. He dominated the Turkish government and defied his own, which did not dare to recall him. Perhaps the influence of Stratford Canning has been exaggerated by later opinion in its reaction against the whole policy that resulted in the war. But without doubt Aberdeen's failure owed much to him.

The war is known as the Crimean War, because the most conspicuous military operations took place there. The expedition to the Crimea, however, with the object of capturing the Russian naval base of Sevastopol and thus destroying Russian sea power in the Black Sea, came as an afterthought. The ostensible purpose of the war had been the expulsion of the Russians from the Principalities; and this was soon accomplished by the Turks, with the help of Franco-British naval superiority and the threat of Austrian intervention. Meanwhile a British fleet sailed to the Baltic, where it caused little harm to the enemy. But the Western Powers were not content to allow the war to come to an end without striking a resounding and decisive blow at the Tsar. Resounding enough to wipe out memories of Adrianople and Unkiar-Skelessi and, for France, of the Retreat from Moscow and Mehemet Ali. Decisive enough to put the Sick Man back on his feet and clip the wings of the Russian eagle. In September, 1854, therefore, French and British armies landed on the west coast of the Crimea and marched south against Sevastopol.

The incidents of the campaign that followed are about as remote from modern warfare as the battles of the Trojan War: the Alma; Balaclava; the Charge of the Light Brigade; the confused struggle on a misty autumn morning at Inkerman; the great storm of 14th November; Todleben's fortifications; the grim, weakening Russian defence; the Malakov and the Redan. In spite of steamships, telegraphy and railways, military equipment and ideas had not changed to any noticeable extent since Waterloo. The number of troops engaged on both sides was as insignificant by our standards as their weapons and tactics were primitive. At the beginning of the siege the French had 40,000, the British 25,000, and there were 11,000 Turks. Opposing them were about 100,000 Russians. Reinforcements only sufficed to replace casualties, for cholera, scurvy and dysentery, deadlier than shot or shell, came with the winter. 9,000 out of the small British army lost their lives in hospital between the beginning of November and the end of February. The Russians suffered still more heavily than the allies by disease and on the battlefield. Owing to allied command of the sea they had to rely on land communications, and thousands died on the long marches over the Ukrainian steppes, not yet traversed by any railway line. Lack of adequate communications constituted, indeed,

the main cause of the ultimate Russian defeat. On the British side two figures, neither a soldier, stood out from the rest. Florence Nightingale, by her belated triumph over medical inertia and masculine callousness, was the harbinger of the Red Cross and of women's rights. Russell of *The Times*, the first of war correspondents, brought home to British readers the horror, muddle and heroism of war in a way that had never been done before. Behind the Russian earthworks, a young officer, Leo Tolstoy, also noted down what he saw, and wondered whether he should exchange a military for a literary career. The Crimean battlefields gave him that practical experience which he later turned to such account in his great novel of the Napoleonic War. Fortunately, a French or British bullet did not deprive the world of *War and Peace*.

Discouraged by Russian reverses, the increasing isolation of his country in face of Europe and the wreck of his hopes, the Emperor Nicholas sickened and died, in autocratic despair. Peace negotiations were opened, and conditions were offered by Russia that went beyond anything France and Britain had demanded the previous year. But to stop a war, once it has started, is always difficult. The Western Powers continually raised their terms and, in spite of Austrian mediation, the negotiations fell through. The siege of Sevastopol went on. In June an assault on the fortress was repelled by the defenders, but a second attack in September was successful. With the fall of Sevastopol, destined in the twentieth century to undergo another memorable, and even more bitter, siege, the war petered out. Everyone had become tired of it except the British, who felt that French arms had gained more lustre than theirs, and thought that insufficient punishment had been meted out to the enemy. Palmerston, now Prime Minister in Aberdeen's place, was eager to pursue the conflict until the Tsarist Empire lay humbled in the dust. But Napoleon III had achieved his purpose, and Palmerston could not go on if he withdrew his troops. The British government gave way and a treaty of peace was concluded at Paris.

In his retirement, Aberdeen wrote to a friend that the country would come round to his view of the Crimean War, but not for fifty years. It took only about half that time. Seldom in British history has any policy been so completely and speedily discredited as the Turkish policy of Palmerston and Stratford Canning. It is true that Britain and Russia found themselves very nearly at war again over Turkey twenty-two years after the Treaty of Paris, and that the British continued to take a dwindling and sceptical interest in the moribund Ottoman Empire up to the first World War. But even the Conservatives, who had become once more the pro-Turkish party, recognized long before 1914 that, as Lord Salisbury said, England had put her money on the wrong horse. The provisions of the peace treaty were designed to give Turkey all the necessary means of resisting Russian aggression in the future. The frontiers of the empire were strengthened; there was to be no foreign interference on behalf of the Christians; the Black Sea was neutralized, and no ships of war were to enter it or naval stations to be maintained on its shores; finally, the independence and integrity of the Ottoman

Empire were guaranteed by the great Powers. None of these precautions proved of any use. The Sick Man was incurable and incorrigible. But the war had, among other results, a lasting and maleficent influence on Anglo-Russian relations. Before it, in spite of acute diplomatic friction, a remembrance of the old friendship and the common struggle against Napoleon persisted. Afterwards, there remained an enmity which not even utter disillusionment with the Turks would dispel from British minds. The Russians, being the vanquished, felt still more strongly. The support Britain had given to the infidel had not only inflicted painful injury on their country, but handed over to Turkish mercy millions of Christians whose only hope of deliverance lay in the strong arm of the Tsar. Political opposition between the two nations became inveterate.

### § 3. *The Slav Revolt*

The immediate effect of the Treaty of Paris was to bring about another lull in the eternal Eastern Question. It was a superficial calm. The set-back that Russia had sustained, the death of Nicholas and the accession of a liberal Tsar turned Russian thoughts for a time entirely to internal reform, above all to the great question of the emancipation of the serfs. The change of rulers from Nicholas I to Alexander II produced a change of atmosphere in the national life that has been likened to the sudden advent of spring after a long Russian winter. It resembled, in a way, the transformation that occurred in France on the death of Louis XIV. In both countries the imposing reign of a despotic sovereign ended in humiliation and reaction from absolutism. In both, too, the reaction led to reforming movements that went far to destroy the existing basis of the monarchy, but not far enough to substitute a new one. Revolution in both cases completed what reform had failed to accomplish. A similar fate overtook the grandsons of Louis XV and of Alexander II.

As might be expected, a rise of temperature in Russia proper awakened aspirations in other parts of the Tsarist Empire, Poland in particular, where the autonomy granted by Alexander I had been withdrawn, after an unsuccessful revolt, by Nicholas. Had the hour not at last come to break free from Russian tyranny and re-establish an independent Poland, whose memory had never ceased to dazzle and torment the vivid Polish imagination? It was a fatal illusion. The second revolt was even more hopeless than the first, and sensible Poles, who foresaw that it must fail and bring terrible punishment upon their country, deplored it. Its authors were conservative landlords and middle-class intellectuals, united only by hatred of the Russians. The Polish masses, who expected, and would have derived, no benefit in the event of its success, were indifferent. At the beginning of the new reign opinion in Russia had been favourable to the Poles, and Alexander and his ministers made genuine efforts to conciliate them by restoring some degree of self-government. The only result was to stimulate extremism. Russian

sympathy for the Polish cause evaporated when its reactionary character and terrorist methods became known, and, above all, when the Polish rebels made it clear that they would not be satisfied with an autonomous, or even independent, Congress Poland, but were determined to regain all that had been lost, including the Lithuanian territories that had been incorporated in the kingdom of Poland before the Partitions. These territories were inhabited mainly by White Russians and Ukrainians, distinct in race and, even more important, in religion from the Poles. The claim was fantastic. Whatever may be thought of Catherine the Great's political morality, she had been to a large degree justified in the assertion that, by taking her share of Poland, she was only annexing Russian populations. No Russian government could ever agree to the resuscitation of eighteenth-century Poland. Moreover it would mean the dismemberment of Austria and Prussia as well as Russia, since the Polish lands had been divided again at the Congress of Vienna between the three Powers that carried out the original Partitions. It was certain, therefore, that the Polish insurgents could not secure their aims except by the ruin of the three great Eastern Powers, in other words by a European cataclysm. The French and British governments could hardly be unaware of the fact. Nevertheless, in response to a well-intentioned but ignorant clamour at home on behalf of the Poles, they intervened with protests, as they had done at the time of the previous Polish insurrection in Nicholas' reign. By this proceeding, as the British ambassador at St. Petersburg pointed out to his government, they merely increased Polish misfortunes, encouraging false hopes that caused the revolt to spread. British relations, however, with Russia were already so bad that nothing could make them much worse.

The Crimean War had been prolonged for a year on the ground of Russia's refusal to submit to the neutralization of the Black Sea, and this part of the Treaty of Paris was especially resented by the Russians, as a degrading limitation of the sovereign rights of a great Power. No one seriously expected it to endure indefinitely; and when the government of Alexander II took advantage of the Franco-Prussian War to announce that Russia did not consider herself any longer bound by the Black Sea articles, there was indignation in Turkey and in Britain, but little interest elsewhere. A far graver blow at the Crimean settlement followed. Again, as had been the case fifty years before, the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Sultan started the trouble. Alexander was dragged along, more than half unwillingly, by the force of circumstances and by a new movement, "Pan-Slavism", the creed of Slav brotherhood under the leadership of the greatest Slav nation, Russia.

The non-Moslem peoples of the Ottoman Empire in Europe were united by membership of the Orthodox Church, but divided in race, language and tradition. One of them, the Greek, or rather some of the Greeks, had already obtained independence; others, the Roumanian and Serb, were self-governing, though still subject; while the Bulgarians and the Slavs of Bosnia and Herzegovina remained





directly under Turkish rule. Except for Greeks and Roumanians, all were Slavs by race or language ; and Pan-Slavist ideas, fomented by the triumphs of nationalism in Europe during the 'sixties and 'seventies, made rapid progress among them. Racial consciousness combined with religious antipathy and the perennial discontent due to Turkish misgovernment to produce an explosive mixture. An outbreak of disorder in Herzegovina supplied the spark. The conflagration spread to all parts of the Balkans inhabited by Slav populations, and the same kind of excesses that had attended the Greek revolt recurred, once more to the scandal of Christendom. The Eastern Question was awake again.

This time the situation appeared more complicated than ever. For it was not only a dispute between the great Powers, the Ottoman Empire and its Christian subjects ; the latter were also at odds among themselves. In short, the Eastern Question was beginning to turn into a Balkan question. Greeks and Roumanians had separate objectives from each other, from the Slavs and from the Powers. Nor were the Slavs all of one mind, in spite of Pan-Slavist sentiment. In particular, an acute division existed, hitherto latent, between Serbs and Bulgarians. As for the great Powers, they were now six instead of five, by the addition of Italy. More important, the central European Powers were fundamentally altered. Prussia, grown into the German Reich, took first place ; Austria, reduced to Austria-Hungary, was a satellite of her swaggering neighbour. France, crestfallen, had become for the moment of small account. Continental Europe was dominated by Bismarck's Germany as it had been, before the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War, by Napoleon III's Empire, and, before the Crimean War, by Russia. The stage began to be set for July, 1914. The Slav revolt against Turkey might, indeed, have precipitated a general European conflict forty years earlier than it occurred, for the immediate cause of the first World War had already begun to operate—namely, Austro-Hungarian fear of a disintegration of the Hapsburg dominions under Slav pressure from inside and out. The Eastern Question was giving rise to an Austrian as well as to a Balkan question. Pan-Slavism seemed a creed even more dangerous to Austria than to Turkey, since in the conglomerate of races owing allegiance to the Emperor Francis Joseph Slavs were in a majority ; and an unprivileged majority. Ancient reasons for rivalry between Austria and Russia, a matter chiefly of conflicting Balkan interests, were now aggravated by the potent influence of racial hostility.

In an argument between Russians and Austro-Hungarians there could be no doubt that the German Empire must in the last resort take the Austrian side. But Bismarck was anxious at all costs to prevent a quarrel between St. Petersburg and Vienna that might develop into a devastating struggle between Slavs and Teutons. He aimed, therefore, and successfully, at reviving the league of the three great Eastern Powers, with its centre now in Berlin. The three empires were able to maintain a common front on the issue of the Slav revolt, although with increasing

difficulty as Pan-Slavist agitation in Russia drove the Tsar towards open intervention on behalf of the insurgents. It was necessary to take measures of precaution. Accordingly, the governments of Alexander and Francis Joseph came to an agreement, whereby, if the continuance of disorder should leave Russia with no alternative but to take up arms against Turkey, Austria would have the right to occupy the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina by way of compensation.

The British government, in the meantime, looked on at the troubles of the Turks and the manoeuvres of the Powers with apprehension and irresolution. It was prepared to join in exhortations addressed to the Sultan by the Concert of Europe, urging him to make concessions to the Christians; but it would not agree to anything more. The Conservatives found themselves in the same dilemma in which the Tory statesmen of the 'twenties were involved. To permit any infraction of the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire would be contrary to traditional British policy, as well as a breach of the Treaty of Paris. On the other hand, it seemed clear that Turkey could only be preserved from destruction, or at least further dismemberment, by the most drastic internal reforms, and that without coercion it was vain to expect the Turks to carry out reforms. Experience had demonstrated only too well how empty were their promises and how tireless their obstinacy. As for the Treaty of Paris, it had become nothing but a dead letter. Should Britain adopt the method of collective coercion, the method of Canning? That might mean another Battle of Navarino and Treaty of Adrianople. Or pursue a waiting policy, and refuse to be committed to any positive action unless vital British interests were affected; by a Russian threat, for example, to Constantinople and the Straits? But it would be dangerous to drift. One thing was certain: conditions were not at all favourable for fighting a second Crimean War. In spite of much provocation, Alexander refrained from repeating his father's blunders and taking any rash step. No assistance could be expected from France on this occasion. Above all, while Disraeli and his colleagues were debating what they should do in case the Russians marched, public opinion in Britain was turning as decisively against the Turks as it had been behind them previously.

There were other causes of this shift of opinion, besides a general disillusionment over the results of the Treaty of Paris. A Turkish default in the payment of interest on foreign loans had a considerable effect. From the period of the Crimean War a great deal of British money had been invested in Ottoman government bonds, and investors received an unpleasant shock that did not dispose them to think kindly of the defaulters. Much more important was the reaction of the public to reports of massacres in the Balkans, especially in Bulgaria, perpetrated by Turkish troops sent to pacify the insurgent Slavs. A celebrated pamphlet written by Gladstone on the Bulgarian atrocities, and a series of speeches by him and other Liberal orators on the same theme, aroused popular feelings all over Britain to boiling point. Gladstone did for the Slavs what Byron had done for the Greeks. The Liberals returned

to the anti-Turkish tradition of the Whigs and even became, in some degree, pro-Russian, so warm was their sympathy for the victims of Turkish misrule. The consequences for Anglo-Russian relations proved not altogether beneficial, since the political opponents of Liberalism were embittered at what seemed to them an attempt to exploit slaughtered Bulgarian peasants in order to drive a Conservative government out of office. They could not defend the Turks, but their anti-Russian prejudices became accentuated.

It is sometimes asserted that up to about thirty years ago the British electorate regarded foreign affairs as a mysterious and remote business which it was content to leave to the experts. The idea is totally mistaken. During the nineteenth century, indeed, long periods occurred when international questions did not engage public attention. But from time to time an issue would arise that excited discussion as much as almost any event between the two World Wars. Such an issue was the crisis that led up to the Crimean War, and, again, to the Slav revolt against Turkey in the 'seventies. It is true that the violence of the latter controversy might partly be accounted for by a personal element. It was the culminating duel between those great and picturesque leaders, Gladstone and Disraeli, under the spell of whose rival eloquence the country became split into two angry camps.

A remarkable Russian, Madame Novikov, played an influential part in the Gladstonian camp. Disraeli called her "the M.P. for Russia in England". A sister of the first Russian volunteer to die for Serbia in the struggle against the Turks, and a woman of ardent spirit and compelling charm, she had a wide circle of friends both in Russia and in England, including, apart from Gladstone himself, eminent Victorians like Kingslake, Freeman and Froude. Madame Novikov was indefatigable in her advocacy of the Slav cause; persuading some; supplying arguments to others; collaborating with Gladstone to answer attacks on Russia in the Conservative press; writing to the papers herself; publishing books in defence of Russian policy and in favour of Anglo-Russian amity. Efforts like hers were all the more necessary, because, with few exceptions, Russians known here, far from increasing British good will towards their country, did much to promote russophobia. It was natural that exiled liberals should be embittered against a government that had persecuted them. But attacks on the Tsar and harrowing stories of Siberian banishment merely served as ammunition to those who wished ill to the Russian people as a whole. So long as the two nations were politically opposed to one another, anti-Tsarist was bound to turn into anti-Russian propaganda.

Events in Turkey followed their usual savage and tedious course. Stimulated by fear of unilateral Russian action, and hiding their disagreements behind a show of unity, the Powers employed every means of persuasion to induce the Sultan to come to terms with his rebellious Christian subjects and give guarantees of tolerable treatment for them in the future. He was lavish with assurances, but refused to make any real concession. At a conference held in Constantinople the proposals

of the Powers, including Britain and Russia, were solemnly laid before the Turkish government. It would not accept them. War between Turkey and Russia was now certain, and it came within a short time of the Constantinople Conference. The Turks offered a stubborn resistance, as they had to the armies of Nicholas after Navarino ; but again they could not withstand Russian attacks alone. Alexander's troops, after some initial setbacks, surged forward until they were within sight of the Turkish capital, and the Sultan was obliged to sign a treaty of peace at San Stefano. If it had been carried into effect, the treaty would have virtually put an end to the Ottoman Empire in Europe. It was a drastic solution. Too drastic for the liking of the other Powers and especially of Britain, who saw in the great Bulgarian principality to be created between the Black Sea and the Aegean a device for out-flanking the Straits and making the whole of the Balkans a Russian protectorate. But what could Britain do ? The Tsar was in a position to occupy Constantinople any moment he chose. Austria was nerveless and, anyway, had been bribed. Bismarck did not interest himself in what happened to Turkey, but only in keeping the peace between Austria and Russia. Even the Sultan's government, in its abasement, threatened to fire on British warships if they tried to pass through the Dardanelles. Pass through, however, they did ; and for months they lay at anchor in the Sea of Marmora, while, a dozen miles away, Russian troops waited impatiently outside the gates of Constantinople.

Defiantly, yet circumspectly, the antagonists glared at each other over the cringing Turk. Slav enthusiasts in Russia were intoxicated by the triumph of Russian arms and furious at the heavy losses it had entailed. San Stefano to them had only been a beginning. The city of the Byzantine emperors seemed within their grasp ; the final deliverance of the Balkan peoples was imminent ; the time had come to pay England back for Sevastopol and a hundred other injuries. If excitement ran high in Russia, agitation in Britain was intense. The thunder of Gladstonians against war-mongering Tories and murderers of Christian women and children was answered by Disraelians with denunciation of Muscovite enemies and Radical traitors. In a contest of this sort the Conservatives had the advantage, in spite of public disapprobation of the Turks. The song of the moment went :

“We don't want to fight,  
But, by Jingo, if we do,  
We've got the men, we've got the ships,  
We've got the money too.  
We've fought the Bear before,  
And, if we're Britons true,  
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.”

The patriotic noise ended by drowning other and more melodious sounds. Peace, however, was preserved for all the bellicosity of London

music-halls and St. Petersburg and Moscow drawing-rooms. Alexander and his ministers did not want war with Britain, possibly with Austria in addition. They did not really like the idea of a powerful Bulgarian state that would probably show as little gratitude as Greece had done. They shrank from the embarrassing prospect of Constantinople in Russian hands. The Disraeli government, on its side, was less war-like than it appeared. A sharp conflict divided the Cabinet, and even the predominant party, led by the turcophil Prime Minister, only meant to scare the Russians and assert British prestige by a piece of bluff.

They succeeded. The Treaty of San Stefano was abandoned by the Tsar, and the Powers reached a compromise at the Congress of Berlin. It was a makeshift compromise, as its authors recognized, or some of them, and events were to confirm. The Ottoman Empire, diminished in extent, obtained a new but precarious lease of life, the prelude to final and inglorious extinction. From a diplomatic point of view, the Congress was universally regarded as a British victory and a Russian defeat. Disraeli returned from Berlin to be welcomed with public acclamation and royal encomium. For Victoria's opinions were very different from what they had been before the Crimean War and the death of the excellent Prince Albert. She restrained herself with some difficulty from making the Prime Minister a duke. But the Russian plenipotentiaries slunk home amid the execration of the Pan-Slavists. After all the Russian blood that had been poured out, Constantinople had eluded them once again; and of the great Bulgaria they had planned only a divided remnant was left. The Turk resumed his hideous oppression of Christian populations, and brother Slavs were even handed over to Austrian rule. The jealousy of Europe and the malevolence of England had prevailed.

The consequences of the Congress justified the unpopular moderation of Alexander's government and proved that the interests of Russia were by no means identical with those of the Balkan Slavs. Before long, the two parts of Bulgaria, so laboriously separated at Berlin, joined each other, without a finger being lifted either by the Sultan or the Powers to stop them. But, far from being Russian puppets, the Bulgars were already on bad terms with St. Petersburg. Early in the nineteenth century Russian statesmen had foreseen that a realization of the chief aim of Russian foreign policy, the liberation of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, might bring inconveniences. In fact, the partial attainment of this aim, at the Congress of Berlin, resulted in Turkey becoming less subject to Russian pressure than at any time since Peter the Great. Two independent states, Roumania and Bulgaria, now imposed themselves as barriers between the dominions of the Tsar and of the Sultan. Moreover, the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina brought the Hapsburg Empire into the Balkans as a competitor with Russia. Freed from German and Italian preoccupations that had accounted to a great extent for their languid concern with Balkan affairs, and backed by Bismarck, the Austrians directed

## BRITAIN AND RUSSIA

It was also partly the result of conflict in the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian, where a continuous triangular struggle proceeded for centuries between Russians, Turks and Persians, inevitably a losing struggle for the last two-named.

While Russia advanced upon central Asia from one direction, Britain approached from another, from India. Early in the nineteenth century it had become apparent that the two empires might one day meet. If so, it would doubtless be somewhere on the northern side of the immemorial gateway to India, the mountain passes leading through Afghanistan by which successive conquerors had descended upon the plains of the Punjab. When, after the treaties of Adrianople and Unkiar-Skelessi, British and Russians became on bad terms in Europe, there were repercussions further east. Their agents intrigued and counter-intrigued against each other in Persia and the Caucasus. The slow but steady Russian progress southwards and eastwards began to get on British nerves. A Viceroy of Palmerstonian views was sent out to India, with instructions to bring Afghanistan firmly under British control before the Russians reached the neighbourhood. He did not prove a happy choice. A British army occupied Kabul, the Amir's capital; the risk of inciting, without subduing, the wild mountaineers was underestimated; the troops were attacked, compelled to retreat back to the Indian frontier, and cut down literally to the last man. It could not be called a great disaster, but it made a deep impression and has ever since affected the British attitude towards the Afghans and their sinister country. For a number of years Afghanistan was left to look after itself. During the 'forties, with improved relations between London and St. Petersburg, fears for the safety of India were calmed, only to revive at the time of the Crimean War. They were not set at rest by Russia's defeat, for the period following the Treaty of Paris saw a swifter Russian advance into central Asia than before. Chronic political opposition between the two countries, aggravated in the 'seventies by the advent of the imperialist Disraeli government and by the Russo-Turkish War, naturally added to these fears. It was now that the spectre of a Russian attack on India grew to full stature.

Not all responsible people in Britain, even among Conservatives, were impressed by the apparition. "A great deal of misapprehension", said Salisbury, who was then Secretary of State for India, in a debate in the House of Lords, "arises from a popular use of maps on a small scale. If the noble lord would use a larger map, he would find that the distance between Russia and British India was not to be measured by the finger and thumb, but by a rule." It was a remark very typical of that singularly acute and cool imperialist. These, however, were qualities in which the majority of imperialists, whether British or Russian, were deficient, especially during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the era of empire-building at its zenith. What excited russophobes, in England and India, was not the proximity of the Russians so much as their relentless approach, that seemed like some phenomenon of nature. Disraeli's Cabinet, urged forward by another impetuous Viceroy at Calcutta,

decided, after some hesitation, again to take preventive action in Afghanistan in order to head off Russia. The second Afghan War, a less disastrous repetition of the first, had a similar result. Gladstone came into office in Disraeli's place, British troops were withdrawn to India, and a return was made to the policy of supporting a more or less independent Afghanistan as a buffer state to protect the Indian north-west frontier.

Catherine the Great had once placed a bust of Fox in her gallery beside those of Cicero and Demosthenes, rather, no doubt, because of his opposition to Pitt than the intrinsic merits of his oratory. Gladstone, also, won fame and admiration in Russia by his advocacy of the Christian cause against the Turks. Not only, indeed, in Russia ; for a Gladstone did more to raise British prestige, in the best sense of the word, throughout the world than all the Cannings, Palmerstons and Disraelis. But Gladstone was far too much of a Liberal to be consistently russophil, in spite of his interest in the Orthodox Church, his friendship for Madame Novikov, and his detestation of Turkish tyranny. Besides, the imperialist current of the times had already become too strong for either him or anyone else to swim against. It was his government that occupied Egypt and established British rule in tropical Africa, and his Viceroy who occupied and annexed Burma. It was while Gladstone was Prime Minister that Britain and Russia came nearest to war over the central Asiatic question. The Liberals had relinquished Afghanistan ; but they were prepared to go to any length rather than let Russia gain control of a country that all parties believed essential to the defence of the Indian empire.

In the same year that Gladstone succeeded Disraeli, Russian military engineers began to lay down a railway through the uninhabited sandhills that form the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea. This line had in the first instance a limited strategic object : to facilitate the conquest of the marauding Turcoman tribesmen, who, from their oases between the Caspian and the river Oxus, endangered the peace of the recently acquired Russian possessions in Turkestan. There were subsidiary, but ultimately more important, motives for the undertaking. A railway across the Trans-Caspian deserts would be the easiest and quickest means of connecting these possessions with European Russia, of tapping the resources of north-eastern Persia and perhaps one day of opening up an overland route to India. It would therefore be of great political and economic, as well as military, value. The campaign against the tribesmen was unexpectedly short. They were utterly crushed and cowed at a single, sanguinary blow by General Skobelev. The Russians moved on, until in a short time they had overrun all the country up to the undefined Afghan frontier. London and St. Petersburg then agreed to set up a joint commission to settle a boundary line separating Afghanistan from the Russian Empire. Before the commission could accomplish its work, a fight took place between Afghan and Russian troops at a disputed point. There had been alarm in Britain as the Russian torrent rolled along to the north of the Persian mountains into

the debatable region where the Soviet Union, Afghanistan and Persia now meet, and towards the Afghan town of Herat, which British opinion regarded with obdurate conviction as the key to India. This frontier clash, known in England as the Penjdeh incident, brought matters to a climax. The British government called out the Reserves and asked for a vote of credit in Parliament. Strong words were used. But the storm passed. Both countries were even less anxious for war than seven years previously, when a Russian army and a British fleet had confronted one another outside Constantinople. Tension continued. On each side strategic railways were hurried forward, and suspicious eyes watched the slightest move of the adversary. Open hostility, however, did not go beyond press and platform; and, after lengthy negotiations, the Russo-Afghan frontier was finally demarcated.

The idea of a Russian invasion of India was not a novelty. When the Emperor Paul repudiated his alliance with Pitt and exchanged hatred of the French Republic for loathing of the British, he proposed a joint expedition by French and Russian troops "to liberate India from the tyrannical and barbarous yoke of the English". Indeed, a Russian force actually started at his orders on this quixotic enterprise. No one except the mad Tsar could take the scheme very seriously. But the British did not forget, and they suspected that something of a similar kind was discussed by Alexander and Napoleon at Tilsit. Napoleon had always displayed an interest in India and his dreams were not to be treated so lightly as those of a Paul. Later, at the time of the Crimean War and of the crisis caused by the Russo-Turkish War in particular, it was inevitable that Russians should contemplate the possibility of a counter-stroke against England in Asia. The notion of invading India became less and less fantastic every year, as they approached Afghanistan from the north and north-west and the Trans-Caspian railway was pushed ahead towards the Oxus. Even on the largest map the empire of the Tsar now appeared close to Herat at least, if not to the actual frontier of India.

Did the threat of invasion amount to a real danger? A Russian crossing of the Afghan borders would be the signal for British troops to march from their frontier stations of Peshawar and Quetta, and there would be arduous distances to cover and battles to fight before the Cossacks could water their horses in the Indus. Supposing a Russian army reached the Punjab, would it in fact be so simple to rouse the native population against their oppressors and drive the English into the sea? An Anglo-Russian war would not be confined to Afghanistan or northern India, areas in which the strategic situation doubtless favoured Russia. It would extend also to other parts of the world, where the advantage lay with Britain. It might involve a general European struggle. What on earth could impel Tsar Alexander III, a peaceful autocrat, to undertake such a senseless adventure. Not ambition to be crowned emperor of Asia at Delhi, nor philanthropic concern for the teeming Hindu masses. One thing conceivably might: another Crimean War. The truth was, and Russians made little secret of it,



that the threat to India seemed to them a useful means of deterring the British from interference with Russian interests elsewhere, especially in the Balkans. Except in central Asia, the Russian Empire lay much more open to attack than the British. The Indian frontier constituted England's vulnerable point. There was every reason why Russia should exploit it, so long as the two nations remained antagonistic. And so Skobelev and other fire-eating Russian generals, who were numerous and influential under the military monarchy of the Tsar, were not discouraged from planning, and proclaiming, grandiose projects of Indian conquest. It followed, if this was the essence of the central Asiatic question between the two countries, that the solution did not lie in Asia. On the day, should it ever dawn, when the governments of London and St. Petersburg thought fit, or were compelled by force of circumstances, to come to a general settlement of their differences, a dispute over this distant region would cease to have any importance worth thinking about.

Before the impression made by the Penjdeh incident faded from British minds, a young English M.P., already marked out for a splendid career, George Curzon, set out to see for himself what Russia was doing in central Asia. He travelled by the Trans-Caspian railway, lately extended nearly a thousand miles from its starting-point to the ancient, famous and hitherto inaccessible cities of Bokhara and Samarcand; a noteworthy feat of engineering, carried through in face of natural difficulties comparable to those surmounted in the construction of the Turk-Sib line after the Revolution. Curzon did not travel without a purpose, nor did he return without a book in his head; the first of a series of monumental volumes on the countries of Asia by which the future ruler of India made his reputation and equipped himself, as no other Viceroy had ever done, for his task. The purpose of his journey was to examine on the spot the military and other significance of the railway and its relation to the defence of India. The aim of his book was to awaken British opinion, from what he considered its unworthy lethargy, to the import of Russian designs on the prosperity and safety of the Empire. An imperialist of religious fervour, Curzon differed from other imperialists of his time in superior knowledge and intellectual energy rather than originality of thought. Foreign nations for him fell into two classes: strong ones to be forestalled and thwarted as competitors; weak ones to be either dominated or absorbed by the British Empire, "which under Providence is the greatest instrument for good the world has ever known." The latter class included Persia and Afghanistan; Russia was pre-eminent in the former. It could not be expected that, holding these views, he would minimize the aggressive activities of Russia in central Asia, or look on her achievements with a friendly eye. But he was too honest not to concede grudgingly that something could be said on the Russian side, if not that arguments open to British imperialists were equally well open to Russian. Curzon scoffed at the idea that the Russian advance towards the Indian frontier was the outcome of a long-matured, unswerving purpose to overthrow

British rule, or that any responsible Russian dreamt of a conquest, as distinguished from an invasion, of India. He rightly recognised that the object of Russian policy was "to keep England quiet in Europe by keeping her employed in Asia." It did not seem to occur to him that England could, in that case, keep Russia quiet in Asia by ceasing to keep her employed in Europe.

"It cannot be doubted," wrote Curzon, "that Russia has conferred great and substantial advantage upon the central Asian regions which she has reduced to her sway." Instead of rapine and raid, the chronic warfare and barbaric anarchy of pre-Russian days, peace and order and returning prosperity had been given to those desolated tracts. He allowed also that Russian dominion was not unwelcome to the majority of her Asiatic subjects. "Russia unquestionably possesses a remarkable gift for enlisting the allegiance and attracting even the friendship of those whom she has subdued by force of arms." This he attributed to both the merits and defects of Russian character and government. On the one hand the amiability and frankness of Russian manners; ability to fraternize with other races; tolerance towards the religious practices and social prejudices of Moslem populations; moderate taxation; generosity to former opponents. On the other hand, slack and incompetent administration, feeble interest in native education, corruption. "The conquest of central Asia is a conquest of Orientals by Orientals." Coming from an opponent, the picture is not unfair. And it illustrates some aspects of British as well as Russian imperialism in the late Victorian age.

Curzon's sombre reflections on Russian energy and British complacency were exaggerated. His prophecies were belied by events. The Anglo-Russian struggle at the approaches to India foretold by him failed to materialize; he did not live to see a Russian railway station at Herat; the Russo-Afghan frontier that he considered so artificial proved to be lasting; Afghan independence and integrity, about which he expressed such scepticism, were preserved. Though Afghanistan remained a sensitive spot, opposition between the two empires was transferred to other regions of Asia.

## § 2. *Far Eastern Rivalry*

In the 'nineties the imperialist pace became feverish. The Powers snarled and elbowed in competition for points of strategic and economic advantage all over the world. It was the age of Cecil Rhodes, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Chamberlain and their counterparts in Russia, in France, in Germany, in Italy, and even in small countries like Belgium. Two non-European nations, also, to the surprise and annoyance of European statesmen, were learning to raise their voices and sharpen their claws, the United States and Japan. The British were occupied mainly in Africa and other fields remote from the Russian Empire; and the Russians were busy with the completion of their Trans-Siberian railway,

far away from any British possession. But circumstances both in Europe and the Far East, not to mention standing grounds of disagreement in the Near and Middle East and in central Asia, made Anglo-Russian relations as difficult as ever. The leading colonial competitor of Britain was France. And France was now the ally of Russia. Anglo-French hostility, principally from African causes, became more and more aggravated during this period, until an outburst occurred over the Fashoda incident, which only failed to result in war because the French, as they had done before in the time of Mehemet Ali, made up their minds to a humiliating retreat. French complaints against England were added to the long and heavy account due to be presented by Russia one day to perfidious Albion. The Dual Alliance of France and Russia, primarily an answer, dictated by common fears in Europe, to the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, served in addition as an instrument to check British imperialism.

Towards the middle of the decade the Trans-Siberian railway was approaching the dominions of the Chinese Empire. The final link between St. Petersburg and Vladivostok must either pass round the borders of Manchuria, or, much more conveniently, cross these outlying provinces. Russia began to be very interested in China and, particularly, Manchuria. Simultaneously the Japanese, showing for the first time how well they had absorbed the lessons of European civilization, waged a successful war on China and imposed a peace treaty, under which the Chinese ceded to Japan the highly important Liaotung peninsula in southern Manchuria, with the harbour of Port Arthur. The situation of this harbour made it the key, not only to Manchuria, but to Peking, the seat of the Chinese government. The master of Port Arthur might consider himself the master, sooner or later, of China. Thus Japan, not, it must be admitted, without the excuse of bad example, gave early indication of those vast schemes of expansion on the Asiatic continent that proceeded so far towards realization in our day. To British and American statesmen of half a century ago, danger to their countries from Japan seemed a dim possibility, if it ever entered their heads at all. But danger from Russia seemed real. They were not disturbed, therefore, by the Chinese defeat, or its consequences. The Russian government, however, reacted vigorously to the Sino-Japanese treaty. An ultimatum was presented to Tokio demanding that the acquisition of the Liaotung peninsula be abandoned. The Japanese, seeing that it was supported by France and Germany, prudently gave way.

Russia's diplomatic success proved an expensive one. It obtained for her the deadly resentment of the Japanese and drew her into a policy of Far Eastern adventure doomed to end in disaster. One step led to another. The services rendered to China against Japan were not meant to be gratuitous. The price was a concession for the construction of a railway across Manchuria, connecting the Pacific coast with the Trans-Siberian Line. But the other Powers were not going to let Russia have a monopoly of Chinese favours, especially since the Celestial Empire appeared moribund and there would doubtless be an abundance for all who asked.



THE FAR EAST

Had not Germany also helped China against Japan? The Chinese showed their gratitude by attacking German missionaries. What more opportune moment to seize the promising port of Kiaochow, in Shantung? The Germans in Shantung were too near Peking not to make Russia anxious. She replied by sending a naval squadron to Port Arthur. A few months later the government of St. Petersburg secured the possession, under the polite term of lease, of the Liaotung peninsula. In other words, it filched from China the very territory that it had forbidden Japan to take, on the ground that to do so would be incompatible with the independence of China. Even though Germany had forced Russian hands by occupying Kiaochow, this was not a creditable act. It was, indeed, typical of contemporary international morality, and Russians could point only too easily to similar acts of extortion committed by other Powers.

By this time Britain had begun to find her position in the world uncomfortable and feel a good deal of misgiving about the wisdom of a policy of "splendid isolation." Two formidably armed alliances faced each other on the Continent, the Franco-Russian and the Austro-German groups. Britain was on the worst terms with one, and on scarcely better terms with the other. Moreover, she had just quarrelled with the United States. In the race for colonies the British, thanks to their navy and the long start they had obtained, had got the biggest prizes. British wealth and sea-power were almost at their peak. But already fears had arisen that the industrial and commercial supremacy of the country was no longer so unassailable as it had been. Other nations had been advancing economically at a faster rate. Two especially, the United States and Germany, were growing rich and populous, and consequently powerful, in a disquieting manner. In the western hemisphere the Americans made it as plain as could be that their will was law. Germany, under the Emperor William II, displayed, in Africa and elsewhere, a restless ambition and a jealousy of England unknown in Bismarck's day. There were even signs that the Dual and Triple Alliances might sink their differences in common enmity to the British Empire. A partition of China among the European Powers would have been at any period unwelcome in London. Just now the prospect caused particular embarrassment.

The expected dissolution of the Chinese Empire produced a state of affairs reminiscent of the Eastern Question during the first half of the century. Britain's concern with China was commercial, not territorial. She held Hongkong, but would not incur the military responsibility of any except insular possessions. India, her one continental dominion in Asia, constituted a serious enough burden. It suited her that the Chinese Empire, like the Ottoman, should be kept as far as possible intact, provided it was open to British trade. British commerce could be trusted to maintain that predominance in China which it had long exercised, at least for many years still. But, unfortunately, like Turkey, China was misgoverned, and had a strong and grasping neighbour to the north: the same neighbour. Unfortunately, also, the Chinese capital, like the Turkish, happened to be so situated as to be exposed to Russian pressure.

By saving China from Japanese aggression, the Tsar acquired an influence at Peking rather like that exerted by Nicholas I at Constantinople, after rescuing the Sultan from Mehemet Ali. It was a tragedy for China, for Russia and for himself that Nicholas II, though a good husband and father, was a weak, vicious and altogether deplorable ruler.

How could Britain meet the increasing threat to her interests in the Far East? No doubt these interests lay less in the north of China than in the centre, the valley of the Yangtse river, and in the south. But Russian influence at Peking would make itself felt only too palpably at Shanghai and Canton. To the wary, experienced mind of the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, it seemed the least objectionable course to let Russia have her way in northern China, and to concentrate attention on other parts of the country without worrying about the lost cause of Chinese integrity. In spite of the part he played at the Congress of Berlin, Salisbury had always thought, and still thought, the traditional British policy of bolstering up Turkey against Russia a mistake. He did not want to repeat the mistake in China. Indeed, he was inclined to come to an understanding with the Tsar's government over the various points of dispute between Russia and Britain in Europe and Asia. Negotiations were carried on secretly for some time, and the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 might possibly have been anticipated by ten years. Mutual suspicions, however, were too great. The failure of this premature attempt manifested itself when Russia's occupation of the Liaotung peninsula was immediately followed by a British seizure of Wei-Hai-Wei, opposite Port Arthur. The Salisbury government passed to uncompromising opposition to the Powers of the Dual Alliance.

Hitherto Britain, under Salisbury's guidance, had studiously refrained from taking sides openly and irrevocably in the contest between the Franco-Russian and Austro-German groups, while leaning towards the latter. The new movement of British policy was directed by the most powerful man in the Cabinet, the arch-imperialist Chamberlain, whose vehement character chafed at the subtle irresolution of the old Prime Minister. Chamberlain persuaded himself that the hour had come to burst through the intricate web of international diplomacy in which the country had become entangled. His reasoning was trenchant, if also crude. Isolation had failed, and it was essential for England to choose an ally or allies. Could there be any doubt at all where to look? British interests obviously lay with Germany, Austria and Italy rather than their rivals. Austria had no objectives outside Europe. Italy, a great Power only by courtesy, could be a useful associate against France in the Mediterranean and Africa. Germany, the senior partner of the Triple Alliance, was as yet a colonial Power of the second rank. Anglo-German rivalry existed, but not on the scale of Anglo-French or Anglo-Russian. There seemed plenty of room in the world for both England and Germany. On the other hand, if Germany did not become a friend, she might some day be a more dangerous enemy than France or Russia. Her vigour and activity were abounding, and she had already become a most effective competitor in world markets. In military power she occupied as

indisputably the first place on land as Britain on the sea. The German navy was still in its cradle, but known to be the Kaiser's darling child. On these grounds Chamberlain decided to enter into conversations with the German ambassador in London with a view to British accession to the Triple Alliance. England would be prepared to support Germany and her ally, Austria-Hungary, against the Dual Alliance in Europe, and to second Germany's colonial aims, in return for German assistance against France and Russia in Africa and Asia.

A more grandiose programme existed in Chamberlain's thoughts than just the conversion of the Triple into a Quadruple Alliance. Nothing less than a political combination between the British Empire, which he dreamed of consolidating by a federation of the self-governing colonies with the motherland, the United States of America and the Triple Alliance. Together the Anglo-Saxon and the kindred Germanic nations would control the world. Ideas of this sort were not confined to Chamberlain, nor had he invented them. "Pan-Teutonism" was as natural and popular a conception as Pan-Slavism, to which it was in part an answer. It attracted all kinds of people in Britain, from pacifists to jingoes, from Congregational ministers and socialists to empire-builders and financial magnates. Did universal dominion not belong of right to the serious, orderly, moral Anglo-Saxon and Germanic peoples, who were at the head of civilization by virtue of innate superiority over other white races? If lesser breeds, decadent Latins or barbarous Slavs, failed to acknowledge Teutonic supremacy, they must be compelled, if necessary by stern measures, to learn their proper place. And stern measures would certainly be needed. Had war not become almost inevitable between Britain and the Dual Alliance? Would it not clearly be to German and American advantage, as well as their duty to the Teutonic ideal, to take Britain's part in the coming conflict?

The campaign was launched by a speech in the congenial atmosphere of Birmingham. Its tone was deliberately challenging. Opinion at home and abroad should be aroused by an irresistible appeal. In strident phrases Chamberlain denounced Russian intrigues in China, and proclaimed his conviction that Britain must abandon her isolation and seek the alliance of other nations near to her in blood and with similar interests. Even war might be cheaply purchased at the price of such an alliance. The speech did not achieve success. There was, indeed, some enthusiasm in America, where British sympathy for the war then being waged against Spain was welcome. But from enthusiasm to concrete action is a long way. In Germany the speech had a cold reception. The sentiments both of public and government in that country towards the British were of envious dislike. It seemed to Germany that England, having helped herself to as many colonial possessions as she could conveniently digest, was now anxious to make sure of retaining them by allying herself to potential rivals. The German government felt the more reluctance to play the English game in the Far East, because Russian absorption there suited Germany very well. Suppose it fell in with Chamberlain's proposals. The effect would be to cause an immediate

deterioration in German relations with the Dual Alliance and a return of Russian attention from China to the affairs of Europe. And the benefits of a British alliance to Germany were debatable. England had no army with which to help Germany in a Continental struggle. In short, there was probably more to gain than to lose by being on bad terms with the English.

Chamberlain did not give up hope, in spite of the rebuff. He returned to the attack the following year, on the occasion of a visit by the German Kaiser to his grandmother, Queen Victoria. Again he revealed Britain's discomfort at her solitary international position; expatiated to the German visitors on his fear of Russian ambition; and drew a lurid picture of the Tsar's armies, swollen by hundreds of thousands of Asiatic soldiers led by Russian officers and armed with European weapons. This line of argument, he doubtless imagined, was well calculated to commend itself to the Emperor William, who, as everyone knew, had an obsession on the subject of the "Yellow Peril." Had he not once sent the Tsar, as a Christmas present, a vast allegorical canvas painted to his design and order, representing a holocaust of Christians under the stony gaze of a Buddhist idol? Chamberlain's talks with the Kaiser were followed up by another resounding public speech, in which he advocated in unambiguous terms an alliance between England, Germany and the U.S.A. The effect was the exact contrary to what he intended. There was a furious outcry abroad, by no means least in Germany, that made it impossible for the German government, even if it had wished, to carry the matter further.

The speech had not, in fact, been delicately timed. The Boer War, culmination of British imperialism, was only a few weeks old. The whole civilized world condemned the crime committed by a great empire against a handful of simple farmers: a war, it seemed, of shameless aggression engineered for the sake of Transvaal goldfields. Moreover, the victims were neither black men nor yellow men, neither Latins nor Slavs, but a Teutonic people, of purer stock than the mongrel Anglo-Saxons themselves. 'And now the very man who bore the heaviest responsibility had the impudence to speak about a Teutonic alliance. Anglo-German conversations continued for a year or two before they were finally allowed to lapse. But the project of bringing Britain into the Triple Alliance never recovered from the Boer War. Very little has been heard of Pan-Teutonism from that time to this.

Nevertheless, Chamberlain's unhappy incursion into foreign politics did not prove entirely barren. The last stages of the Anglo-German conversations were accompanied by parallel Anglo-Japanese negotiations. The idea was that the proposed Teutonic alliance should be put to the test in northern China, where Germany and the United States as well as Britain were interested in thwarting the designs of Russia, and the three Powers might join hands with Japan. The Japanese had better reasons than anybody for hostility to Russia. They had recently shown a marvellous national discipline and talent for assimilating European methods. It would be a pity if these fine qualities were to

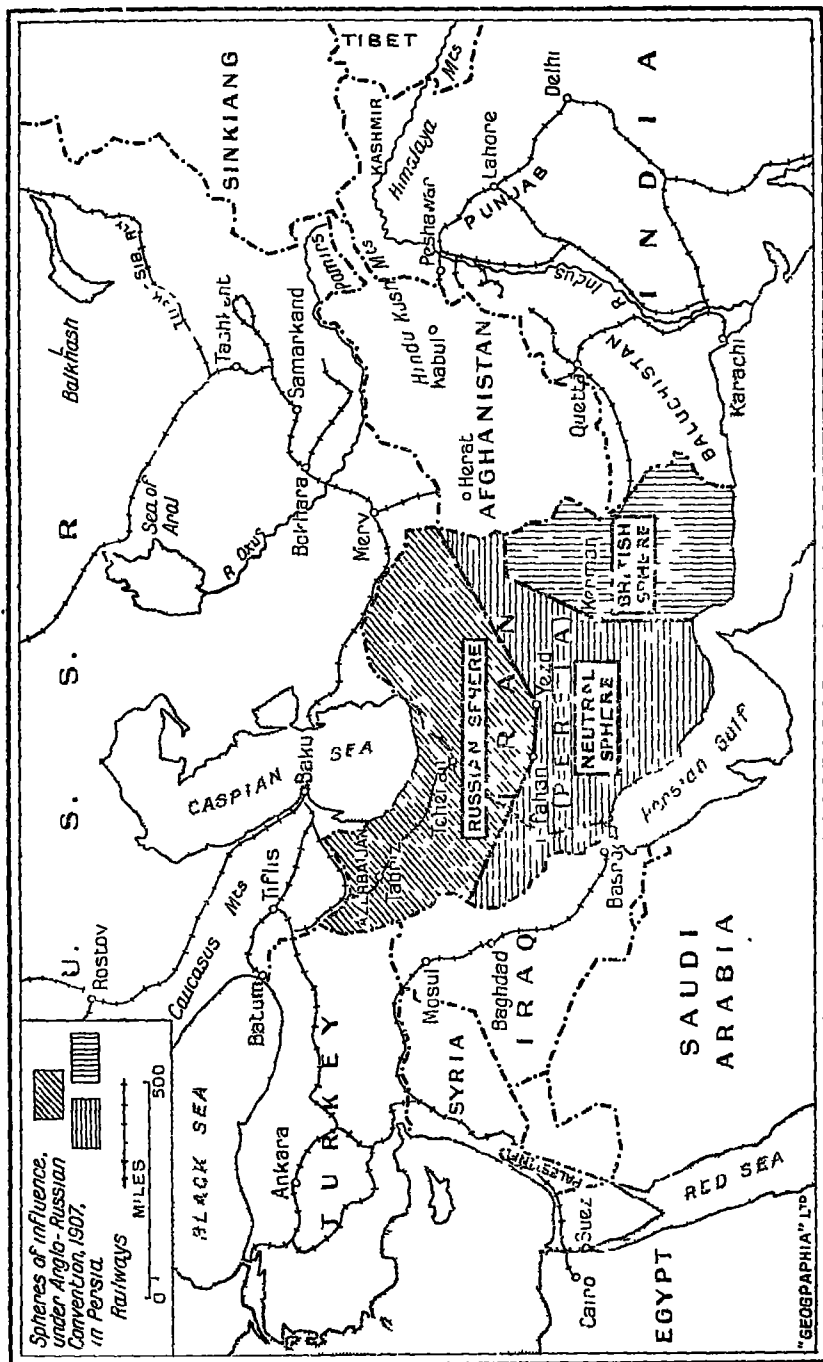


be wasted. When the talks with Germany languished, those with Japan continued. They concluded in a formal Anglo-Japanese treaty of alliance, whose publication caused a considerable diplomatic sensation. At last, it appeared, England had decided to abandon her policy of avoiding foreign commitments and to follow the example of the other great Powers of Europe. The treaty was, of course, directed against Russia. The Japanese obtained a promise of British support in case of attack, not by Russia alone, but by Russia in concert with another Power or Powers ; that is to say with France, or Germany, or both. The British navy would protect them against a second coalition, like that by which they were faced at the end of the Sino-Japanese War. In London the alliance with Japan was hardly expected to do more than, by strengthening her against Russia, to call into existence a balance of forces in the Far East that would serve British interests there in the cheapest manner possible. The threat of British naval intervention ought to be sufficient to fulfil the treaty obligation. Not that the occasion seemed likely to arise. No one imagined that the puny Japanese would so soon have the audacity to challenge the Russian colossus to battle, much less that they would do so with success.

It appeared reasonable to believe that, whatever the consequences of the Anglo-Japanese treaty might be, the rift between Britain and the Dual Alliance had become complete. In fact, this country was just about to start on a new course, that would bring it first to an understanding with France and Russia and finally into war at their side against the Triple Alliance. Paradoxically, the Japanese treaty formed one of the first links in the complicated chain of circumstances that led to reconciliation with France, and subsequently to the Anglo-Russian Convention. The result, however, was due not so much to any deliberate plan on the part of British, or French, or Russian statesmen as to the criminal folly of William II and his ministers.

### § 3. *The Approach to Agreement*

The Kaiser had motives for welcoming the news of an alliance between England and Japan. This new occasion of dispute between the former and the Dual Alliance could not fail to turn out to Germany's advantage. In the first place, it would keep Russia more firmly engaged than ever in Asia. And, secondly, it would help towards the realization of a favourite idea to which his volatile and twisted brain was always recurring, the formation of a grand league of all the Continental Powers, under German leadership, against the envied English. He therefore used every endeavour to incite the Tsar to involve himself deeper and deeper in the Far East. As for the Russians and French, they were naturally displeased by the unexpected development of British policy. But, while the Russians saw in it only another sign of the incurable malice of England towards their country, the French were affected in a different way. They were getting over their anger at Fashoda, and



becoming convinced that France could not, in view of her mortal quarrel with Germany, afford English enmity as well. The schemes of her Russian ally in China were a source of annoyance to her, for the same reason that they gave satisfaction to Germany. And the Anglo-Japanese treaty, seeing that it was likely to increase Russian preoccupation with the Far East, and bound to make English relations with the Dual Alliance more uncomfortable than ever, acted as a danger signal. It may be reckoned among the causes that disposed France to seek British friendship by putting an end to Anglo-French colonial friction, at a time when Britain, for her part, was beginning to think it desirable to come to an understanding with France.

The British government did not at all intend the alliance with Japan to be taken as a declaration of war against the Dual Alliance. In a sense it was a gesture of defiance to Europe as a whole, in reply to the universal condemnation of British action in South Africa. At any rate, a perceptible anti-German flavour might be detected in it. A purely local arrangement like this did little to satisfy Britain's determination to escape from her isolated position. Every day isolation grew less splendid and more perilous, in an epoch of mounting armaments and multiplying symptoms of international ill-will and unrest. The fact was painfully demonstrated to the world at the coronation of King Edward VII, which took place a few months after the Anglo-Japanese treaty was concluded. Four foreign warships only visited Portsmouth for the naval review that formed part of the ceremonies; two Japanese, one Italian, and one Portuguese. These scanty representatives of not quite Teutonic friends promised small aid for the British navy, if it had to withstand a challenge in the Atlantic or the North Sea. Up to that time the Admiralty had been obliged to reckon with a hostile combination merely of the French and Russian fleets. But now naval votes were being passed by the Reichstag, and keels laid down in German ship-building yards, on a scale that evoked profound anxiety in London. Against what country were all these preparations, so expensive and yet so popular in Germany, directed? There was only one possible answer, taking into account recent Anglo-German history. No argument could be more fitted to persuade British statesmen of the imprudence of remaining on bad terms, for the sake of an African desert or a Chinese railway, with the Continental opponents of the German Empire. They were thus as ready as the French government to try to reach a definitive settlement of colonial disputes between the two nations. After an intricate series of negotiations agreement was successfully attained. The agreement established an Anglo-French *entente*, not an alliance. That, or something very near to it, would come about gradually.

While the negotiations were in their last stages, war broke out in the Far East between Russia and Japan, between the ally of France and the ally of Britain. The effect was to hasten a compromise. Neither France nor Britain was obliged by treaty, or wanted, to be dragged into the conflict. British public opinion, however, eagerly took the part of the Japanese David against the Russian Goliath. From the first the war

went badly for Russia. The Japanese had made all their plans with patient skill, as before Pearl Harbour, and they struck with a similar act of sudden treachery. Enjoying the benevolent neutrality of Britain and the United States and the advantage of a theatre thousand of miles from the enemy's sources of supply and man-power, they knew that the contest would not be so unequal as it seemed to Europeans. Russian disasters were due, besides naval inferiority and the difficulty of communications, to the same weaknesses that the Crimean War revealed : bad leadership and faulty administration. But the battles on land were desperate and by no means one-sided. Russian defects were more conspicuous at sea. On its way to the Far East, the Baltic fleet encountered a number of Hull trawlers on the Dogger Bank. For some odd reason the commanders imagined that Japanese torpedo boats had sallied out from a British port to attack them in the darkness, and gave orders to open fire. One trawler was sunk, with the loss of two men, and others were hit. In the existing state of British feeling the incident seemed serious. But the government resolved to avoid a breach with Russia. The dispute was referred to a tribunal of arbitration at Paris, and agitation subsided.

War between Japan and Russia might be an awkward episode to London and Paris, but in Berlin it appeared in another light. It would be sure to yield profit whichever side won. On the other hand, the Anglo-French agreement was not only a setback to the Kaiser's projected Continental league against England, but unmistakably an ominous development for his country. Bismarck's sleep had been disturbed by the nightmare of coalitions. Scarcely had he been dismissed from office when Germany found herself faced by that alliance between France and Russia which he had feared and bent all his energies to prevent. Would the Franco-Russian alliance be joined by England, and Germany encircled by a hostile ring of nations impeding her destined greatness and menacing her safety ? The ring must at all costs be broken before it became too strong. It occurred to William that the Dogger Bank incident might be a good opportunity for making an approach to the Tsar, so as to drive a wedge into one segment. Nicholas did not show himself unresponsive. A treaty of alliance between the German and Russian empires was actually drafted, and accepted by him. But the Tsar changed his mind. The German government then decided to try another method. The issue chosen was the question of Morocco.

Morocco had for many years been coveted by France in order to round off her African empire. But British objection to a great Power establishing itself on the Strait of Gibraltar had been an insuperable obstacle. The Anglo-French agreement circumvented the difficulty by allowing France a free hand in Morocco, except Tangier and a zone in the north, in exchange for a free hand in Egypt. It was a bargain that gave Germans a legitimate cause for complaint, for they had interests in Morocco which the French, relying on their agreement with England, proceeded to ignore. Why not make use of this issue to strike a blow at France while her ally was occupied with a war against Japan, and before

her newly acquired friendship with England had time to ripen? Accordingly, it was arranged that the Emperor William should make a dramatic visit to Tangier, and a violent diplomatic and press campaign opened in Germany against France and particularly against the French Foreign Minister, Delcassé, the man who had made the *entente* with Britain. Thoroughly frightened, the French government got rid of Delcassé and acceded to the German demand for an international conference on Morocco.

Germany's Moroccan success was followed by an even more brilliant stroke. France had been taught that her English friend could not save her from chastisement. Next, the Dual Alliance would be destroyed once for all and its partners attracted into the political system that resolved round Germany, leaving England isolated. It was the season of year when sovereigns of those days were accustomed to cruise in northern waters. The *Hohenzollern*, with William on board, arrived at Björkö, on the Finnish coast, where the Tsar's yacht lay at anchor. The moment was propitious. For Nicholas felt depressed and irritated. His Far Eastern war was ending ingloriously, even calamitously; and grave internal troubles were brewing in the Russian empire. France had shown herself during the war an unsatisfactory ally, less concerned for Russia than for her colonial agreement with the detestable English, to whose help Japanese victories had been partly due. Whereas Germany, the rival, had given generous support and encouragement. Nor was France powerful enough to be a dependable ally in any case. Her stock had fallen with Delcassé. An influential pro-German party existed among Russians; and Nicholas himself belonged to it. In the seclusion of the Tsar's yacht the two monarchs had a heart-to-heart talk; William drew from his pocket an amended version of the treaty of the previous year, which he happened "quite by accident" to have there, and persuaded Nicholas to sign it. But the outcome was a fiasco. The Kaiser's master-stroke miscarried and the treaty remained a scrap of paper. Russian ministers induced Nicholas to repudiate his signature, on the ground that it was an act of dishonour towards France. And in Berlin, also, opinion showed itself critical, to the Emperor's amazement and distress. Germany's chance of uniting with Russia, and through her of bringing France as well into the German orbit, had been lost. Was it the last chance? Nobody could then suppose so. Yet deep-lying causes were driving Germany and Russia, as also Germany and Britain, apart from one another.

The defeat of Russia in the Far East had consequences of the utmost importance. In the first place, it directed Russian thoughts and aspirations away from Asia and back again to Europe, back, that is to say, to competition with the Triple Alliance over the Balkans and Constantinople. In spite of the pro-German party at Court and in the capital, anti-German sentiment among Russians was intense, not less because it had been for generations suppressed by the policy of successive Tsars up to Alexander III. Anglophobia was superficial in comparison. The Franco-Russian alliance owed its being to Slav antipathy towards the

Teuton, exacerbated by a long list of material grievances against Berlin and Vienna and by jealousy and apprehension of the dazzling empire created by Bismarck. That alliance must not be lightly abandoned or endangered. The Far Eastern adventure, after all, was only a sideshow, and had turned out disgracefully too. Did reasons not exist for suspecting that Germany had lured Russians into it for her own interested purposes? While their eyes had been fixed on China, they were conveniently blind to German penetration into Turkey. And now the Kaiser and his government were making use of Russian misfortunes to threaten their French ally, the only friend they had, with the aim of forcing the Powers of the Dual Alliance into abject dependence on German good will.

Secondly, the war had vital results at home. A political and social crisis that rocked the Tsarist system on its foundations ensued. For a time the country was in a state of confusion and the government lost its authority. It regained control at the cost of promising constitutional reform, a promise partially redeemed. A liberal current predominated; and Russian liberalism was naturally sympathetic to the Western democracies and hostile to the conservative monarchies of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Tsar's government could not affront public opinion by carrying through an unpopular counter-revolution in foreign policy. Besides, it relied on French financial support, one of the chief pillars of the Dual Alliance from the start, and badly needed a loan at the moment. Both foreign and domestic considerations therefore weighed against yielding to German blandishments and tended rather to strengthen the Dual Alliance.

The retreat of Russian imperialism proved to be more than a strategic withdrawal. Russian boundaries in central and eastern Asia are today what they were at the conclusion of peace with Japan. And the imperialist retreat was not confined to Russia. While that country, disillusioned with Asiatic conquest and in revolt against Tsarist autocracy, moved towards liberalism, the Conservatives, who for twenty years had been in power in Britain, gave way to a Liberal government. At the general election that followed they were swamped. It was a reaction against, among other things, the aggressive imperialism of Chamberlain, a return to Gladstonian principles. Good relations with Russia were part of the Gladstonian tradition, and liberal reforms in the Russian Empire were bound to make it easier to achieve them. No sudden reversal, however, of British foreign policy occurred. British imperialism had really begun to decline at the end of the Boer War, and the new Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Grey, was a Liberal Imperialist, whose views did not differ very materially from those of his Conservative predecessor.

Grey succeeded to an ugly inheritance. The Moroccan crisis, in spite of the disappearance of Delcassé, still remained acute and the Entente with France was bending under the strain of German pressure. The conference that Germany had demanded would shortly meet at Algieras. France insisted that the Entente should be converted into a regular defensive alliance. To this length Grey would not go; but

military conversations, already begun tentatively by French and British representatives, were given formal authorization. Grey decided that at the forthcoming conference France must be backed to the limit. If she discovered that British support was ineffective and that she had sacrificed her Egyptian claims only to be ousted from the expected compensation in Morocco, the Entente would lose all its value in her estimation, and she would then most probably gravitate to the side of Germany. In that case Russia could hardly help going the same way, and Britain would find herself again, but more dangerously than ever, alone. Thus, at Algeiras Germany had to meet the solid opposition of the British and the Dual Alliance. The result was a disappointment for her and a success for France. The Dual Alliance had been confirmed and the Anglo-French Entente strengthened. Such were the lamentable consequences of Tangier and Björkö.

It was in these circumstances that the British government, with adroit French encouragement, determined to bring about a settlement of Anglo-Russian differences on the lines of the agreement with France. The idea in itself was not new. It had occurred, as we have seen, to Lord Salisbury before the Russian occupation of Port Arthur; and the Liberal Imperialists, Grey in particular, had advocated an understanding with Russia in the Far East at the time that the Conservative government, under Chamberlain's leadership, was seeking an Anglo-German combination against the Dual Alliance. When, during the Boer War, Britain came to the definite conclusion that the policy of isolation must be abandoned, and that, because of Germany's rejection of the offers made by Chamberlain, an arrangement would have to be made with the Dual Alliance, there were Englishmen who wished to approach Russia first, and not France, on the ground that the issues in dispute between the French and British empires were less tractable than those between the Russian and British. But the Anglo-Japanese alliance made this, temporarily at least, impossible. After the Entente with France, the bond uniting Britain with one of the partners of the Dual Alliance naturally conduced to an improvement of relations with the other partner. Despite the war between Russia and Britain's ally, and although that expert russophobe, Curzon, had, since he became Viceroy, been resolutely pursuing an anti-Russian policy on the borders of India, the British government, as its handling of the Dogger Bank incident showed, was anxious not to rule out a reconciliation. By displaying the weakness of the Russian giant, the war removed British reasons for fearing, and consequently opposing, him. The giant seemed now humbled and distraught, in a mood to swallow his resentment at British attempts to block his schemes in Asia and realize the value of British friendship in case of an attack on the Dual Alliance.

The opening session of the Duma, or parliament, promised by the Emperor Nicholas to his people, had just begun in the Taurida Palace at St. Petersburg when a new British ambassador arrived in the capital, armed with instructions from the Cabinet to enter into immediate negotiations with the Russian government. No better choice could have

been made than Nicolson (afterwards Lord Carnock), the diplomatist who had so ably represented Britain at the Conference of Algéciras. As a young man he had made his name in Persia. He was chargé d'affaires at Teheran in the 'eighties, at a critical period of Anglo-Russian relations after the Penjdeh incident. Subsequently he had been appointed to Constantinople and Sofia, where Anglo-Russian friction was constant and painful. These experiences had not made him an enemy of Russia, as might have been expected. On the contrary, British obsessions about the safety of India, and the Russian menace in Asia generally, left him sceptical. When asked in later years, writes his son and biographer, why he was so convinced of the necessity of an Anglo-Russian agreement, he replied unhesitatingly, "From what I saw in Persia in 1886." It was at Teheran that he discovered that "the solution of the Central Asian problem lay in St. Petersburg," at the very time when the youthful Curzon, in the course of his journey by the Trans-Caspian railway to Bokhara and Samarcand, made the same discovery. But the deduction he drew was the opposite to Curzon's.

On the Russian side the negotiations with Britain were conducted by the Foreign Minister, Isvolsky, a clever, nervous man, of liberal inclinations, disposed to settle long-standing causes of dispute between his country and England, but apprehensive of embroiling the Russian Empire on that account with the Triple Alliance. The fate of Delcassé haunted him. It could be only too readily imagined what sort of reception Germans would give an Anglo-Russian convention. The obstacles to agreement were, indeed, great. From the material point of view Anglo-Russian differences did not, it might be said, present any problem of an extraordinary kind. They resolved themselves almost entirely, now that China was out of the way, into one issue, the defence of India. This was a subject upon which the British were remarkably sensitive. But, since Russia had no interest whatever in India, except as a means of disturbing English minds, it should not prove so formidable in practice. In the background there still lurked the question of Constantinople and the Straits. At this date, however, it constituted only a potential, not an actual, cause of trouble. Again, Anglo-Russian economic rivalry, though irritating in places, could be described as trivial compared to that between Britain and Germany. Russia, in spite of a striking advance in the last ten or fifteen years, had only just begun her career as an industrial country. On the other hand, and the importance of this circumstance could scarcely be exaggerated, the psychological gulf between the two nations was tremendous.

The liberal phase in Russia had a brief history; and, even while it lasted, disorder, bloodshed and harsh repression marked it, to a degree certain to incense British opinion. The Duma had no sooner met than a deadlock occurred with the government. Already British good will was cooling. A visit of the fleet to Kronstadt had to be cancelled, and a projected meeting of King Edward and the Tsar abandoned. Matters became worse when the Duma was summarily dissolved. The news happened to be received in England on the day that Campbell-Bannerman,



the Prime Minister, addressed a meeting in London of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a body representative of all European parliaments, including the Russian. He tried to make the best of an awkward situation by exclaiming, tactfully as he thought, "The Duma is dead : long live the Duma !" But the Tsar was not amused. Liberals of the Radical variety hated the idea of friendship with "Tsarist assassins." Other people could with difficulty bring themselves, for all their growing germanophobia, to overcome the distrust and aversion they felt towards the hereditary enemy. Anglo-Indian opinion was especially opposed to any sort of a compromise with Russia. Fortunately, the leading members of the Cabinet, including Campbell-Bannerman, were sound. According to Grey, agreement could scarcely have been reached without the active co-operation of Morley, Gladstone's disciple, at the India Office, so eager to obstruct was the Indian government. On the Russian side, it was recognized that an understanding with England had become imperative, and that ancient prejudices must be surmounted. But it could not be expected that memories of the Crimean War and San Stefano, of Palmerston and Disraeli, of English encouragement to infidel Turks and heathen Japanese, of a century of constant malevolence in every part of the globe, could easily be forgotten.

The scope of the negotiations was limited to three topics, Afghanistan, Tibet and Persia, all directly touching Indian defence. On the first two agreement did not prove hard to obtain. The last was the crux. If Russia became on amicable terms with Britain, and consequently abandoned all thought of threatening the safety of India, Afghanistan and Tibet might be reduced, as points of friction, to insignificance. Persia was a different matter. For generations that feeble state had been exposed to Russian influence, and latterly had fallen more and more under Russian political and economic subjection. Once again, something like the Russo-Turkish and Russo-Chinese situations reproduced itself. But Persia was much less able than Turkey or China to offer resistance. And not only the capital, but nearly all the main centres of Persian population and trade lay in the north of the country, within reach of its encroaching neighbour and far from possibility of British help. Thus Britain found herself in an extremely disadvantageous position to support the Persians.

British interest in Persia had been slender up to the second half of the nineteenth century, when the Russian threat to India began to be taken seriously. After the Penjdeh incident a change took place. The governments of London and Calcutta came to attach a new importance to Persian avenues of advance to the Indian borders. A Russian occupation of the country would be a menace in two ways ; first, because, in addition to the northern, the western frontier of Afghanistan, and Baluchistan, would be open to attack by land ; and, secondly, because of the disturbing prospect of a Russian naval base on the Persian Gulf. The strategic arguments for restraining Russian penetration into Persia were reinforced by commercial. Yet how was Russia to be restrained ? Before the Japanese war she had been absorbed in China. But now that her Far Eastern ambitions had been checked, or extinguished, would

she not turn her eyes once again to the Middle East and plan to possess the warm-water port of Tsarist dreams on the Gulf? The temporary weakness of the Russian Empire at the end of an unsuccessful war might be a suitable opportunity to arrive at an arrangement that would tie Russian hands in the future. The alternative would be a policy of unreserved opposition to the Russians, with the object of making Persia a British protectorate. This alternative, however, even if desirable or possible otherwise, was clearly out of the question, in view of the European situation.

Isvolsky was willing to consent to Russia's exclusion from Tibet and Afghanistan, as Grey demanded, but a strong section of Russian opinion showed itself as uncompromising about Persia as the Anglo-Indians. Persia had been marked out, if not as future Russian territory, at least as a field for Russia alone to dominate and exploit. Why should England, on the thin pretence of concern for the safety of India, be permitted to establish a hold there? Did she expect to get her own way in Tibet and Afghanistan and give nothing in return? Finally both parties were content with a division of the country into three spheres; a northern sphere of Russian influence, a south-eastern sphere of British, and a neutral sphere, comprising the rest of Persia. On the whole, the terms of the Convention were distinctly favourable to Britain. All the objectives that Grey and Nicolson had set themselves were attained. Afghanistan and Tibet were closed against Russian interference; the principle of Persian integrity was proclaimed; those parts of Persia considered essential to the defence of India, including the Gulf, were safeguarded; the influence of Russia was confined within definite limits. It is unlikely that such a satisfactory result could have been secured, if a less opportune moment had been chosen to approach the Tsar's government.

The Convention had a good, if not enthusiastic, reception in Britain, except from a few on the Left, to whom it was a matter of principle to object to any dealings with the tyrannous Tsar, and from the professional russophobes of the Right. Curzon emerged from political retirement to make a speech of protest in the House of Lords. Had he not, when head of the Indian government, declared an agreement with Russia to be an hallucination? He denounced the unnatural treaty with emphasis, and particularly its Persian clauses, which he prophesied would conduce neither to the independence of Persia, the safety of India, nor the peace of Asia. Even for a Curzonian prophecy, it was inept. Persian independence became more secure after the Convention than before. India at once ceased to be a focus of British anxieties. For many years no grave external danger to that country would appear. When it did come the danger was not from Russia but from Japan, whose career of conquest dates from the day that, aided by alliance with Britain, she managed to expel the Tsarist Empire from southern Manchuria and took its place. United action by British and Russians might, if it had been maintained long enough, have averted the tragedy of China, the invasions of Malaya and Burma and the disaster of Singapore. Both the safety of India and the peace of Asia, it now seems

possible, depend on Anglo-Russian collaboration more than on anything else.

All this was in an uncertain future on the morrow of the Convention of 1907. Europe, and not Asia, the terrifying clash of the great Powers, and not a petty squabble over Ispahan or Bandar Abbas, came uppermost in the thoughts of the statesmen of London and St. Petersburg who made the agreement. Otherwise it would certainly not have been reached with such comparative ease. A common fear of Germany urged them on. And, but for the series of European alarms that succeeded until the catastrophe of 1914, the Convention might not have lasted any time. "The understanding with Russia," wrote Nicolson to Grey some months after its conclusion, "is in its early infancy, and will require, for reasons which I need not explain, careful nurture and treatment. Any serious check to this infant growth may kill it before it has advanced in years." There were undoubtedly Englishmen and Russians in high places who would have regarded that occurrence with indifference, or satisfaction. And the German Kaiser, who was beside himself with rage, might be counted on to use every effort to choke the life out of the noxious organism.

## CHAPTER V

### ALLIES AGAINST THE KAISER'S GERMANY (1907-1917)

#### § 1. *Anglo-Russian intercourse in the early twentieth century*

FROM the beginning, the Anglo-French Entente was popular in this country, surprisingly so considering the offensive insults that the press of London and Paris had been hurling at one another a couple of years previously. The reason did not lie only in the opposition of the two nations to Germany, though that may have been the most important factor. However different in character and habits, they were both capitalist democracies, conscious of enjoying a higher degree of civilization than the rest of Europe and enabled by long and close mutual acquaintance to comprehend one another. Moreover, Franco-British friendship had deep roots. Its origin may be traced to the work of Talleyrand and Castlereagh at the Congress of Vienna, if not further back. During the nineteenth century, in spite of occasional sharp quarrels, British and French had constantly found themselves on the same side. Possibly also, the change in Britain from the Teutonic Victorian atmosphere to the lighter, somewhat Gallic, Edwardian facilitated understanding. The Anglo-Russian agreement, on the other hand, was strictly a marriage of convenience. British statesmen of both parties might appreciate its value, but in no sense could it be called popular at the time it was made

or afterwards. The British and Russian peoples as a whole knew next to nothing about each other, and what they did know they did not like. Could there be anything in common between the smug, rich, trim England of the first decade of the twentieth century and contemporary Russia, a primitive, untidy land, with a weak middle-class and a hide-bound bureaucracy, with few big towns and countless illiterate peasants, whose standard of living resembled that to be seen in India or China rather than in western Europe? Anglo-Russian history for nearly a hundred years back was a depressing catalogue of incessant rivalry and friction; the Russo-Japanese War and the Dogger Bank incident made feelings in both countries more bitter than at any time since the Penjdeh affair. Russian reverses at the hands of Japan diminished fear only to increase contempt of the Muscovite. The average Englishman, after the unpleasant experience of the Boer War, regarded foreigners in general with a jaundiced eye. For none was there less good to be said than for Russians. He might, perhaps, hate the Germans more; but he also respected them more. The arbitrary and inefficient despotism by which the Russians allowed themselves to be governed, their superstition and shiftlessness, disgusted him; accounts of pogroms and assassinations aroused his loathing.

A few politicians, a journalist here and there, might be found to express mildly pro-Russian opinions. Some people of literary tastes could be heard to admire the Russian novelists. For a view typical of the ordinary man, let us look at one of those illustrated encyclopedias designed at once to entertain and instruct Edwardian families. It is a work entitled *The World of To-day*. The date is 1906. "Russia", we read, "is a devouring empire", "the bugbear of neighbouring nations," built up by "patient and unscrupulous diplomacy, where not by force", her alarming bulk fortunately "weighted by debt and weakened by poverty of mind and body". Her rulers have been a series of repulsive tyrants. Her society "shows a superficial refinement in the luxury and pride of its nobles", whose "most striking talent is in the speaking of foreign languages", their proficiency at which is accounted for by the awkwardness of their own. This uncouth tongue has produced a dreary school of fiction, that has strangely taken the fancy of happier nations; "full of gloom, of ugly realistic features, and often with vulgar crime as the main interest"; almost totally devoid of wholesome humour; and in which the "dominant sentiment is a sympathy with sin as well as suffering". Thus did Turgenev pay for the vices of Tsarist ambition in Asia, and so were the blunders of Russian admirals visited upon the author of *Anna Karenina*.

Reflections of the kind just quoted, although they might still be made a year or two later, were not as likely to be committed to paper. It cannot be a coincidence that the period from the Anglo-Russian Convention up to 1917 saw the publication in English of a number of books on Russian life and art conceived in a friendly spirit that was something quite novel. This seemed natural enough when the two countries became allies at war with the Central Powers. The experience

of British opinion on the subject of the Soviet Union before and after June 1941 shows what sudden and complete revolutions in public sentiment towards another nation can occur in times of stress. The transformation of ideas between the Convention and the first World War consisted, however, merely in a gradual shift of opinion, in some ways like that which followed Soviet Russia's entry into the League of Nations and her first appearance as a potential ally against Nazi Germany.

Some of the best interpretations of Russia and Russian literature are to be found in the writings of Maurice Baring, an acute observer as well as a distinguished author. His *Mainsprings of Russia* was published a few months before the outbreak of war in 1914. Its tone is one of discriminating sympathy. He does not minimize the faults of Russian character or society. But they are outweighed for him by qualities and virtues of the most precious description. "The Russian soul is filled with a human christian charity which is warmer in kind and intenser in degree, and expressed with a greater simplicity and sincerity, than I have met with in any other people anywhere else; and it is this quality behind everything else which gives charm to Russian life, however squalid the circumstances of it may be". Before the Grey-Isvolsky agreement, the Russian soul did not make much appeal to Englishmen. About the government of Russia he is more, and in fact severely, critical. It is "less good than what Russia deserves", and the country, he thinks, is relatively worse governed than it was in the days of Alexander II. "The outsider, who has had any experience of Russian life in the past, will at once see that the progress in the general state of affairs from what existed ten years ago to what exists now has been immense. . . . The trouble is that the government and the administration have not kept step and tune with the national progress". But his strictures on the illegal and reactionary methods of Russian officialdom are far removed from those highly flavoured, one-sided reports of Tsarist brutality formerly current in this country.

It would, of course, be a mistake to suppose that the change in British views about Russia perceptible in the Edwardian epoch was due altogether, even unconsciously, to political considerations. It had previously become apparent to western Europeans, first in France and then, partly through French influence, in Britain, that a culture worthy of notice existed among the far-off Muscovites. As early as the 'eighties Matthew Arnold could write that the vogue lost by the French and English novel had been acquired by "the novel of a country new to literature, or at any rate unregarded, till lately, by the general public of readers. . . . The Russian novel now has the vogue, and deserves to have it. If fresh literary productions maintain the vogue and enhance it, we shall all be learning Russian". After admiration for Russian literature came admiration for Russian music and for the Russian ballet. Russian science and learning also began to command respect in the West. The notion, common up to the middle of the nineteenth century, that civilization is a monopoly in the modern world of the so-called Teutonic and Latin races had been discredited. But, to begin

with, the impression made by Russian artistic and intellectual achievements was confined to a small minority of persons. Only by degrees did it percolate to the man in the street, and produce some modification of his attitude of ignorant contempt. In this field the Russians had the advantage. For even if the masses were almost untouched by education, the intelligentsia with all its shortcomings was highly cultivated and catholic in its tastes. The masterpieces of English literature were well known and appreciated in Russia. Not only the masterpieces : popular fiction, by authors like Conan Doyle, was widely read. And among Russians of liberal opinions British political and social institutions retained all that prestige they had long possessed.

Personal intercourse between British and Russians under the last of the Tsars may probably have been slighter than between either and any of the other great peoples of Europe. Russia was not a country to which Englishmen travelled for pleasure. Those who made their way there went on business. Anglo-Russian trade had a considerable development, and there were British colonies of some size in St. Petersburg and Moscow, although small compared to the German. Russian industry, whose expansion began in the latter part of the nineteenth century, owed much to British capital, management and technical skill. Some of the biggest undertakings in the empire were British-owned. Then, English tutors and governesses were in demand for wealthy Russian families ; and, besides the diplomatic and consular staffs, young men preparing for a career in those services arrived to study the language. Like the rest of the world, and even more so, when Russians went abroad they preferred, if they had the choice, to go to France rather than to foggy and utilitarian England. Those who came here usually had, for their part also, business or professional reasons ; and in addition there continued to be a steady trickle of political refugees, who were unlikely to be good propagandists for imperial Russia. The latter included a studious conspirator whose assumed name, Lenin, was scarcely known inside his own country, and not at all outside until the Revolution. An odd chance made London the birthplace of Bolshevism. It was at a congress of Russian Social Democrats held there in 1903 that the split occurred between the majority (Bolsheviks) led by Lenin and the minority (Mensheviks).

It would be wrong to omit mention of one circumstance that thirty or forty years ago had not only a prominent but an important effect on the intercourse of nations. A double family tie existed between the reigning houses of Russia and Britain. King Edward was a brother-in-law of Alexander III, father of Nicholas II ; and another son of Queen Victoria, the Duke of Edinburgh, married a Russian Grand Duchess. This connection exercised some influence on the events that led up to and followed the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907. Not that Nicholas could be termed anglophil. He felt himself drawn rather towards the conservative principles of Berlin and Vienna than the constitutional monarchy of London ; and his dearest aim was to hand on his crown, with its autocratic prerogatives undiminished, to his successor.

§ 2. *The antecedents of the first World War*

At the beginning of June, 1908, the royal yacht, *Victoria and Albert*, steamed through the Baltic and dropped anchor at the port of Reval, bearing King Edward on an overdue visit to his nephew, the Tsar. It was a ceremonial meeting, intended to underline the agreement of the previous summer and demonstrate to all the world that the two nations were at last reconciled. The world did not fail to be impressed, and even attached more importance to the occasion than it really deserved. But in a symbolical, if not a practical, sense the Reval meeting was momentous, as the outward sign of a great diplomatic act, the consummation of a Triple Entente between Britain, France and Russia, destined to have consequences of a magnitude surpassing what the most imaginative of contemporary minds perceived. The British, who had so long wavered between the rival European groups, had made their final decision.

This would be another year of international crisis, the most formidable since that precipitated by the Kaiser's landing at Tangier. A month after the meeting of King Edward and the Emperor Nicholas, an insurrection broke out in the Ottoman Empire. The two events were not unrelated. Europe believed, and rightly, that the Turkish question had a place among the subjects considered by British and Russian statesmen at Reval, and the rumour was an element in precipitating the plans of the insurgents. Ever since the Berlin settlement the Balkans and Turkey had been in a state of uneasy equilibrium, disturbed by continual unrest and punctuated by sporadic revolts and massacres, not to mention a war between Serbs and Bulgars and another between Turks and Greeks. Worse had been prevented partly by the Bismarckian system of a network of alliances under the wing of the Triple Alliance, partly by the diversion of Russian interest to the Far East and the diminution of British influence at Constantinople, and partly by the policy of Sultan Abdul Hamid. One of the most nefarious even of Ottoman rulers, he was crafty enough to be able for many years to play off the great Powers against each other. But his situation became more desperate every day. It was no longer a question only of Christians in revolt against their Moslem masters. The ferment of modern ideas had spread to the Moslems themselves. A party of reform had sprung up, generally known as the Young Turks, whose objects were to turn the Ottoman Empire into a constitutional state according to liberal principles, and to weld the multifarious populations, Christian and Moslem, together within the framework of this state. It was a visionary scheme and only accelerated the dissolution of the Empire, which probably nothing could have averted. For a while, however, the Young Turks were successful. Abdul Hamid was forced to grant a constitution, and later deposed and incarcerated. It began to seem possible that Turkey might be rejuvenated and strengthened, a prospect that the Balkan nations contemplated with anything but pleasure. For years they had been watching the process of decay expectantly and quarrelling in anticipation over



Alexander Isvolsky





**Viscount Grey of Falloden**

*[Photo by Elliott and Fry]*

the spoils. What would happen were Abdul Hamid's fall and Turkey's awakening to coincide with a return of Russia and England to Constantinople, not as enemies now but as partners? Excitement in the Balkans mounted.

Aerenthal, the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, decided that the moment had come to put into effect an industriously premeditated plan for the formal annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the provinces occupied by Austria under the Treaty of Berlin. What would be the attitude of the Powers? It was a risk he thought it safe to run, assured as he was of German support, with France and England little interested in that region of Europe and Russia still incapacitated by her Far Eastern disasters and internal commotions. Moreover, Aerenthal had been working in co-operation with Isvolsky. For the latter desired to improve the good relations that had lately prevailed between St. Petersburg and Vienna on Balkan affairs, all the more in view of the recent Anglo-Russian agreement. There could be no better means of guarding against the danger of conflict between the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance than by consolidating Austro-Russian partnership in south-eastern Europe. Aerenthal agreed that Russia was entitled to compensation for giving her consent to his plan to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina. It occurred to Isvolsky that suitable compensation would be afforded by the removal of a grievance that rankled greatly in Russian minds—namely, the treaty provision prohibiting the passage by foreign warships of the Straits. It was this provision that had prevented the Russian Black Sea fleet from joining the Baltic fleet on its voyage to the Far East during the Russo-Japanese War. In the middle of September, Isvolsky and Aerenthal met in Bohemia to discuss those matters. They conversed at length; but, by a curious oversight, Aerenthal refrained from telling the Russian Foreign Minister that annexation of the provinces had already been definitely decided and would take place within three weeks. Isvolsky proceeded on his way to sound the governments of the other Powers, on the assumption that the previous assent of the signatories to the Treaty of Berlin was requisite before his arrangement with Austria could come into operation. From Italy he went to Paris, and in Paris he received the stunning news that a proclamation annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina to his dominions had been issued by the Emperor Francis Joseph, simultaneously with an announcement of Bulgarian independence.

Nothing could show more clearly the tense state of international nerves at this epoch than the veritable hurricane raised by Aerenthal's unscrupulous stroke. It made scarcely any practical difference, for the provinces were in everything but name already part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Bulgaria, again, who obviously acted in collusion with Austria, had been only nominally dependent on Turkey. But the highest indignation was excited in Constantinople at these fresh blows to Turkish prestige and to the hopes of the Young Turks that their country would soon emerge from its degradation. In Serbia there was even wilder agitation. Bosnia and Herzegovina were populated

by Slav kinsmen, with whom the Serbs dreamt of uniting in a great Serbian state. The annexation seemed to be designed, and in fact was designed, to make a fulfilment of the dream impossible ; perhaps even as a first step towards the absorption of the small but turbulent Serbian nation into Francis Joseph's empire. The fever in the Balkans spread to Russia, where Austria's unilateral action must in any event have aroused grave resentment. Memories of the crusade against Turkey at the side of Serbia a generation ago revived ; Slav enthusiasm blazed up. If the Serbs became involved in war with Austria, it would plainly be difficult to withstand the insistence of public opinion that Russia should march to their help. And war, during the whole of that winter, was close. Germany and France could hardly in that case have avoided taking sides with their respective allies. Sooner or later Britain too would almost certainly have been drawn in. In a word, the Bosnian crisis constituted a dress rehearsal, with the same actors taking the same parts, for that of July, 1914.

The crisis was still in an early stage when Isvolsky left France for England to confer with Grey. His feelings towards Aerenthal were of the blackest and his mood was one of distress. For he realized that there could now be small hope of securing the agreement of the Powers to the opening of the Straits. And, in any case, his countrymen in their present state of mind would blame him for sacrificing the vital interests of brother Slavs to gain such a minor advantage, and despise him for having been so simple as to allow himself be duped by Aerenthal. He met with a lukewarm reception from Grey and his colleagues. The Turkish revolution had been hailed in Britain. It was hoped that, with the disappearance of the ineffable Abdul Hamid, lost British influence at Constantinople might be regained. Liberals in every country were accustomed to look to England, the home of liberalism, for moral support ; and British governments did not discourage the practice. The Turks would certainly not like the idea of opening the Straits, or be willing, at this time above all, to make any concession whatever to Russia. Should Britain allow further pressure to be put on them, thus forfeiting all chance of obtaining their confidence and blighting a desirable movement of constitutional reform ?

On the other hand, Grey felt committed to the Triple Entente. Its collapse would be more than perplexing ; it would be perilous. He therefore, in his conversations with Isvolsky, evaded the question of the Straits but consented to lend Russia British diplomatic support in demanding a conference on the Bosnian issue. Let the Austrian Tangier be followed by a Balkan Algeciras. Aerenthal, however, was not to be moved either by Serbo-Russian clamour or by Anglo-French protests, since he knew that he had the German army behind him, and that the Triple Entente, unprepared to fight, would have to give way. The German Kaiser and his government were disconcerted by Aerenthal's stroke at first. But they soon realized that they could not desert their only friends and saw an opportunity of punishing Russia for the Anglo-Russian Convention. A German ultimatum was presented to St.

Petersburg ; Russia and Serbia were obliged to accept accomplished facts ; and the conference demanded by the Triple Entente was abandoned.

The consequences of the Bosnian crisis did not come up to the expectations of one side, or the fears of the other. It was an undeniable triumph for Germany and Austria over the Triple Entente ; a conspicuous humiliation for the Russian people as well as for the government of the Tsar ; a less conspicuous yet real defeat for France and Britain. British and French statesmen were pessimistic, German and Austrian exultant. The Triple Entente had showed itself too weak to withstand the first blow. Its career would be short and inglorious. This forecast, reasonable at the moment, proved wrong. Mutual confidence between Russia and the Western Powers suffered for a time ; the Triple Entente reeled ; but it stood. Slav opposition to Austria-Hungary in the Balkans stiffened. National pride in Russia had received a shock that it did not forget, while the country rapidly got back its strength. France and Britain were made aware that their partner would not easily submit to a second reverse of the same kind, that it would be dangerous for them to expose him to one.

Together Aehrenthal and the Young Turks began the ruin of the Ottoman Empire. After the loss of Bosnia and Bulgaria came that of Tripoli, which the Italians snatched by violence. Then the Balkan states united in a league and fell upon the unfortunate Turks before they had recovered from their war with Italy or the great Powers could interfere. They were again beaten, with unexpected completeness and celerity, and the victors prepared to partition the remainder of Turkey in Europe between themselves. It was an extremely unsatisfactory result from the point of view of the Triple Alliance, or rather of the Central Powers, since Italy had by now become a nominal member of the alliance. German influence continued to be predominant at Constantinople when Abdul Hamid gave way to the Young Turks. To see the despised Balkan states put to rout an army trained by German officers and despoil Germany's client was a nasty surprise. To Austrian eyes the defeat of the Turks and victory of the Slavs appeared a more serious matter. For it would be bound to augment excitement and dissatisfaction with their lot among the Slavs inside the Hapsburg Empire. The government of Vienna made no secret of its disappointment, or of its hostility to the Serbs. Russian diplomacy had been partly responsible for the formation of the Balkan League. It was Russia's answer to the Bosnian trick. But the government of St. Petersburg felt embarrassed by the success of the allies, and not at all anxious to go to war against Austria. For their part, the Austrians were content at the moment to veto Serbian access to the Adriatic coast. A conference of the great Powers met in London, with Grey in the chair, and the conflict was prevented from spreading beyond the Balkans.

The Balkan allies did not long remain in harmony. Deprived by Austrian dictation of the outlet she wanted in the Adriatic, Serbia demanded compensation from Bulgaria. In a second Balkan war the

Bulgars fought against the others, were overwhelmed, and forced to make a disadvantageous peace. The year 1914, accordingly, opened with Turkey sullenly reduced to Constantinople and a small bridgehead beyond it in Europe, Bulgaria discontented and revengeful, and Serbia, Greece and Roumania, their appetites not sated but sharpened by success, greedily digesting their gains. To the minds of statesmen and soldiers in Vienna the situation was bad; indeed, intolerable. The recent failures of Austrian policy in the Balkans were reacting ominously on the inextricable domestic problems of the Hapsburg Empire. There existed a powerful war party, who believed that the Austro-Hungarian realm could only be preserved from dissolution by extreme measures. Their arguments became more and more pressing. The question was, whom should they select to attack? Preferably the Serbs, no doubt. But what about those worthless allies and secret enemies, the Italians and Roumanians? It would probably entail a general European conflict. That might be all to the good. With German assistance short work would be made of Russians and French, the predominance of the Central Powers in the Continent would be permanently assured, and Austria-Hungary would live.

The British and French were alarmed at Austro-Russian antagonism in the Balkans. They did not care a straw which Balkan state obtained Scutari, or Monastir, or Kavalla. But they cared very much lest they be dragged by a quarrel between Austria and Russia into war with the Central Powers. One of the reasons why France showed herself rather backward in supporting her ally during the Bosnian affair seems to have been that she had got into difficulties again with Germany over Morocco. By intervening too positively against Austria she might tempt Berlin to hit back at the Triple Entente in Africa. It was not the end of Moroccan trouble. Continual French encroachments in that country angered the Germans, and promises of compensation elsewhere did not appease them. In the summer of 1911 the German government suddenly announced that it had decided to send a warship to the Moroccan port of Agadir, and by this repetition of the Kaiser's visit to Tangier started another international crisis, the most serious since the Bosnian. In so doing it succeeded in strengthening the bonds between Britain and France and causing a further deterioration of Anglo-German as well as of Franco-German relations. The armaments race, both on land and sea, gathered momentum. Nevertheless, moderating German influence over Austria-Hungary at the time of the Balkan Wars led to a certain relaxation of tension. In the early months of 1914 the international sky seemed to Grey clearer, and after the storms of the last three years a period of calm might, he thought, be expected.

The British Foreign Secretary did not, and could not, know how false was the calm, that by this time Germany had committed herself irrevocably to the support of her Austrian ally and that the Austrians had made up their minds, and were now preparing, to deal the decisive blow in the Balkans by which their supremacy would be asserted and Russia confounded. They merely awaited a suitable pretext. It came

in the form of the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the throne, and his wife at Sarajevo. The government of Vienna did not bother about proof of Serbian implication. After making sure of German concurrence, it dispatched an ultimatum containing impossible demands to the Serbian capital and declared war. The challenge was one that Austrian, and German, statesmen knew very well the Tsar would hardly dare to decline. The Tsar hesitated ; but he accepted the challenge, and the first World War began.

What if the Russian government had surrendered after Sarajevo, as it did after the Bosnian annexation ? It is easier, perhaps to answer that question today than it might have been a few years ago. By consenting to the destruction of Serbia in 1914, Russia, and her partners in the Triple Entente, would have acted as the same three Powers acted in the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1938. Can there be any reasonable doubt that the consequences would have been similar ? The grasp of the Central Powers on the Balkans and Turkey would have tightened ; their prestige and self-confidence would have been fortified ; the Triple Entente would have collapsed. In a year, or two years, or five years, Germany and her satellite Austria would have moved again, either against Russia or France. In all probability the French and Russians, if they had fought, would have been struck down in succession and the Continent would have fallen irremediably under German domination. Then our turn would have come. The ministers of the Tsar had not the lessons of Munich to guide them in the last days of July, 1914. But they were convinced that they took the only course compatible with the honour and safety of their country. Nor would public opinion have allowed them to take any other. Russia could not permit the Hapsburg Empire destroy Serbia any more than Britain could permit the German Empire to overrun the Low Countries and occupy the coast of the English Channel. No sentimental tie, however existed between Britain and Belgium like that connecting Russia and Serbia. It had been with the greatest reluctance that Russians abandoned the Serbian cause in the Bosnian crisis, and restrained the Serbs after their victory over the Turks. To throw them now to the Teutonic wolves was impossible, unthinkable.

There is not a period in history that has been more closely scrutinized and exhaustively discussed than the month of July, 1914. So much so that the wood has been obscured by the trees. The facts are simple enough. The criminal in the first degree was Austria, and no amount of special pleading can clear the men of Vienna of the guilt of deliberately plunging Europe into the worst calamity that had ever afflicted it. Yet Austria would not have decided for war without German complicity. And the men of Berlin were also guilty, as accessories before the fact ; in a sense guiltier, inasmuch as Germany was more powerful than Austria and so bore a heavier responsibility for the preservation of peace. It was Germany who let a Balkan quarrel become a world war, by failing to check her junior partner, as she might have done if she had desired. In the last resort, the first World War occurred because Germany,

having by her own mistakes and arrogance forged a ring of hostile states round herself, saw no way of maintaining her hegemony in the Continent except to break through the ring by violence. It is, of course, one thing to assert that criminal liability must rest on the Central Powers, and quite another to say that the other Powers were altogether blameless. They were not. All the great Powers and certain of the minor, including Serbia, were culpable to some degree. As between Britain, France and Russia it is hard to see why one should be condemned more than the remaining two. None of them wanted war, but none was willing to sacrifice important interests to avert it. Russia would not allow Austria-Hungary control the Balkans; France would not give up her claim to the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine or her Moroccan plans; Britain was determined to keep her margin of naval superiority over any possible rival and her colonial supremacy, and to maintain a Continental balance of power. In pursuit of these aims each of the three committed certain acts of provocation that could not fairly be described as defensive. On the whole, however, it was self-preservation that drove the Triple Entente into war; not, as in the case of the Central Powers, self-preservation against evils of their own making, but against the impulse of forces beyond their control. The alternative for them was to resist together or to perish singly.

Is it possible that, had the Triple Entente been converted before July 1914 into a triple alliance of Britain, France and Russia, war might have been avoided? The gamblers of Vienna and Berlin had adequate warning, it is true, that the three states would stand together and calculated that they could win before British intervention became effective. But, at least, peace would have had a better chance, if their opponents had appeared to the Central Powers firmer and more united and the odds against success longer. France and Russia both desired a formal alliance with Britain. Domestic circumstances in this country made it impracticable, in spite of the weighty advice of Nicolson, who had come from St. Petersburg to the Foreign Office. Even members of the Liberal Cabinet had small understanding of the gravity of the international situation and of the anomalous nature of our obligations towards the other members of the Triple Entente. The Liberal party and the public as a whole had even less. Home affairs, above all the Irish question, absorbed British minds to the exclusion of everything else. A binding commitment to go to war in defence of France alone was an undertaking that the government would have found it very difficult to make the country accept. To promise assistance in advance to France's ally would have been far more unpopular. For the Balkans were distant and Russia was still regarded with unfriendly suspicion, partly from ideological prejudice and partly because of continuing political friction.

Anglo-Russian differences in Asia, especially in Persia, did not come to an end with the Convention. It had been accepted with noticeable lack of enthusiasm by both British and Russian officials in the Middle East. The former complained, with some justification, that Russia

treated her Persian sphere of influence as if it were her own territory, in defiance of the pledge to respect Persia's independence and integrity. The latter were furious at the manner in which the British encouraged ideas of establishing representative institutions at Teheran. As usual, England seemed to be making good use of liberal principles for her own ulterior purposes. Inevitably, the Persians, who hated the Anglo-Russian agreement, did what they could to make trouble. And matters were not improved when an American financier came on the scene to advise the Persian government and indulged, in connivance with a British agent, in flagrant anti-Russian intrigues. Grey's patience was tried by Persia more than by any other subject. He told the Tsar's ambassador in London that the policy of friendly co-operation between the two nations was becoming impossible, and threatened to resign his office unless the government of St. Petersburg exercised more restraint over its subordinates. Isvolsky and his successor, Sazonov, who had spent many years in England as a young man and was decidedly anglophil, also had their Persian irritations. Russia, critics said, was being pushed out of Persia. A Shah devoted to the Russian cause had been deposed through English influence, and schemes for railway development blocked by English opposition. Nor did Persia constitute the sole difficulty. British and Russians were pursuing divergent lines in Turkey, and common jealousy of the Germans alone prevented antagonism from becoming acute.

Britain would not have allowed herself be involved in war because of a Balkan struggle between Russia and Austria. But when France was drawn in, the issue affected British interests in a way too vital to ignore. The clinching argument was Germany's invasion of Belgium. Without that felony, as iniquitous if not as inexcusable as Austria's attack on Serbia, British intervention might have been delayed. Perhaps it would have come too late. Not until Hitler taught us did it become possible to appreciate what a German victory in the first World War would really have meant, though the terms of peace imposed upon Russia by imperial Germany at Brest-Litovsk could have served as a lesson.

### § 3. *The Russian Revolution*

The Western Powers had cause to be thankful in the first few months of the war, and indeed for three years afterwards, that the German army was obliged to fight on a second front in the East. Only by the narrowest of margins could a breakthrough be averted in France and the invader stopped at the Battle of the Marne. So narrow a margin that the two army corps, which were detached by the German High Command to go to the defence of East Prussia on the eve of the battle, might well have made all the difference to its outcome. As it happened, the two army corps arrived on the Eastern front to find that the crisis there was over. For, in order to ease the pressure on France, the Russians made



a reckless advance into East Prussia in the opening weeks of the war. After some initial success they met, before the end of August 1914, with disaster at Tannenberg. A whole Russian army was wiped out. But not in vain. If the Marne had gone in favour of Germany, it is practically certain that France would have been compelled to acknowledge defeat, as in 1871 and again in 1940. The Germans and Austrians would then have been able to throw almost all their resources the following year against the Russians. It is difficult to suppose, in view of the weakness of Tsarist Russia, that resistance could have been maintained. And with France and Russia both out of the war, victory over their last enemy, England, might have fallen to the Central Powers.

Superior German generalship was mainly responsible for Tannenberg. Subsequent Russian defeats were caused rather by material deficiencies than by the fault either of leaders or of rank and file. The Russian armies fought with all their old stubbornness. By the end of the winter of 1914-1915 they had been driven out of German territory; but they had conquered, and still held, the greater part of Austrian Galicia. In fact, they had won battles against the Austro-Hungarians as notable as those gained by the Germans over them. Losses both in men and material were stupendous. Guns, shells, equipment of every kind were running desperately short. Millions of new recruits were being hastily trained. There existed only sufficient rifles for one in three of them. At Austrian insistence, the Germans brought reinforcements from France in the spring and a great offensive forced the Russians back hundreds of miles, again with shattering losses. In the first ten months of war Russian casualties amounted to 3,800,000 men. Yet, though they had to retreat out of Poland and Galicia, their line remained intact. The hopes entertained by Hindenburg and Ludendorff of a decisive success in the East had been disappointed. The fighting spirit of the Russian troops still continued high. Behind the front morale was already declining and became steadily worse.

The outbreak of the war had been greeted in Russia with a tempest of patriotic and anti-German popular feeling; and a corresponding growth of cordiality towards Britain and France, now both Russia's allies, became perceptible. But, when Turkey joined the Central Powers, intercourse with the outside world was cut off, except by the slender threads leading to the White Sea and Vladivostok and through neutral Sweden. The effects were very serious. For Russian industry and transport were far less advanced than in the second World War and proved incapable of producing, and moving, the munitions needed to keep the military machine working properly. To restore communications with their eastern ally was one of the principal objects of the Franco-British expedition to the Dardanelles. Its failure and the sequel, Bulgaria's defection to the enemy camp, seemed almost as bad a blow to Russians as the reverses in Poland and Galicia. Most ominous of all was the deterioration of the internal political situation. Tsarist rule, shaken by the Japanese war and the abortive revolution that followed it, began again to totter dangerously on its sinking foundations under

the influence of defeat, depression and disorganization. The greatest weakness appeared at the top, in Nicholas himself, who allowed the Empress to govern him, while she in turn was in the power of the infamous monk, Rasputin. Honest and able, or comparatively able, ministers were driven out of office and replaced by tools of Rasputin and incompetent intriguers more eager to save autocracy than their country, if not actual traitors, as all sections of Russian opinion regarded them. The nation was demoralized from above.

Although politically and economically the Russian position grew more and more desperate from 1915 onwards, the next, the last year of Tsarism, proved the most successful of the war from a military point of view. The shortage of munitions had been alleviated, if not overcome, partly by Allied help and also through Russian exertions. The gaps in the ranks were filled. It was believed by the Central Powers that Russia had been at least temporarily put out of action and that they could concentrate on the French and Italian fronts. They received an unwelcome surprise when General Brusilov's offensive, hastened by an urgent appeal from the Italians, broke the Austrian lines and, at a heavy cost to the victors, took hundreds of thousands of prisoners. Only with considerable difficulty could Germany rescue her ally from complete destruction. Again, while the Austrians hurriedly stopped their Italian operations, six German divisions, badly wanted for the coming Franco-British attack on the Somme, were dispatched to the Eastern front.

At the end of this year's campaign German generals felt pessimistic. Allied superiority in the West was beginning to become evident, and it remained impossible to send help from the Russian front. There was a slight improvement during the winter, thanks to the rout of the Roumanians, who, stimulated by Brusilov's triumph, had rashly entered the war on the Allied side. But in the early part of 1917, as seen by the German commanders in the East, things looked bad. It was the time when Germany, losing hope of a decision on land and deluded by assurances that it would bring England to her knees in six months without fail, determined to resort to unrestricted submarine warfare. Until the English could be starved into submission, orders were given to stand on the defensive in both West and East. A providential event came at this moment to the aid of the Central Powers, the beginning of the Russian Revolution, and gave them once more the possibility of a military victory.

Trouble started among the civilian population and in the rear of the Russian armies and spread thence to the front, dissolving discipline, destroying the will to resist the enemy, turning the troops at last into a frantic mob with only one coherent thought, to stop fighting and get home immediately. They ceased to take the slightest interest in a war for which they felt no responsibility, and in which, furthermore, they lacked the consciousness that they were defending their own land. For in March 1917 the front line extended roughly from Riga to Odessa, that is to say to the west of Great Russia, though well within the borders

of the Tsarist Empire. Thus the very victories over the Austrians contributed to Russian collapse. Disintegration, however, was a gradual process, and not for months after the first stages of the Revolution were the Central Powers able to do as they liked on the Eastern front. From the outbreak of war until the spring of this year at least half the total strength of Germany and Austria-Hungary had been engaged there. Eighty German divisions, besides the greater part of the Austro-Hungarian armies, needed to be kept in the East during the whole summer. There was even a Russian offensive in July, which managed to cause the enemy some moments of apprehension. Meanwhile the submarine campaign had passed its climax without bringing the result expected by Germans, the United States had entered the war and every day meant an increase of Allied superiority in men and material. But the July offensive was the expiring convulsion of the Russian army. Nothing on earth now, whatever political developments might occur, could restore its value as a fighting instrument.

The downfall of Tsarist rule resulted from a blind, spontaneous movement of the masses against a government that they had many reasons to hate and an order of society that seemed to them unjust, above all against war and hunger. Symptoms of a similar kind appeared in all other belligerent countries about the same time. The Austrians were in despair; their Italian opponents likewise; there was serious mutiny in the French army, and disorder in the German navy; among the stolid British war-weariness and discontent were becoming formidable. In Russia the crisis was more acute than anywhere else because it supervened on an already endemic revolutionary situation, dating from long before the war. Once the dam was burst, the flood poured forth with a destructive impetus that nobody had the power to control, least of all the ineffective liberals and moderate socialists who at first floated on the surface. Even the resolute band of men that finally took the government into their hands could do little but drift with the stream. The Revolution had not been of their making. Their leaders, when it began, were abroad and their party was at first a fraction in numbers and influence.

The Western Powers had for some time before the Revolution been alarmed at reports of the unsatisfactory internal situation in Russia and the possibility of pro-German reactionaries contriving a separate peace. It was of vital importance to them that the Eastern front, which had diverted so many German divisions from France, should not give way. But apart from sending missions of various descriptions and a limited amount of supplies, they could contribute no direct aid. And then good advice to Russian ministers did not receive any attention. News, therefore, of the fall of Tsarism aroused excitement and optimism in France and Britain. The German plotters in Petrograd, said the British press, had sustained their most signal defeat. The cause of freedom and of the Allies had triumphed. These rejoicings were soon realized to be premature. All was not well; the removal of the pitiable Nicholas had only been the start of the real Revolution, and a sinister

agitation was going on to force the provisional government to withdraw from the war. This agitation, Paris and London learnt, was led by extremists known as Bolsheviks, obviously in German pay, who were demanding an immediate peace with the Central Powers and the subversion of all social order. Their chief appeared to be one Lenin, a professional revolutionary who had arrived in Russia from Switzerland in April, a month after the Tsar's abdication, travelling by way of Germany. Would the provisional government, among whose members the pro-Ally socialist Kerensky seemed to be the only man with any command over the Russian people, take strong enough measures to put a stop to the growing anarchy and suppress those who had an interest in fomenting it? It seemed for a while, especially when a premature insurrection failed, that extremism would be mastered. But Kerensky was a broken reed. The influence of the Bolsheviks again increased. At the beginning of November, after a brief and insignificant struggle, they seized power from Kerensky and proclaimed a new government, with Lenin at its head.

These events were not of a sort to be regarded by the belligerent nations with cool detachment, like a revolution in some South American republic. They represented a success of the first order for the Central Powers, a corresponding set-back to the Allies, who foresaw that it would mean a powerful reinforcement of their enemies in the West. The subsequent history of Allied relations with Russia cannot be understood without taking into account the circumstances in which Soviet rule was born. It was the offspring, in the French and British and American view, of treachery and defeatism. The anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist notions of the Bolsheviks were no doubt sure to make them unpopular in any case with the governing classes in the democracies. But ideology was a matter of secondary importance in the middle of a struggle for life or death, and insufficient to turn dislike into active hostility. The Allies, indeed, would have been as ready, in different circumstances, to make common cause with Lenin against the Kaiser as their successors with Stalin against Hitler. Russia, repudiating a solemn obligation, had deserted them: that was the burden of their complaint and the origin of their hatred of Bolshevism. The treatment suffered by France and Italy in the next great war shows that a country which leaves its allies in the lurch cannot expect much sympathy or mercy from them.

In the anxious situation in which they found themselves Allied statesmen naturally did not stop to think of the ultimate consequences of antagonizing the new rulers of Russia. They had to consider immediate problems. How many divisions would Germany be enabled to transfer to the Western front, and how soon? How could the Central Powers be prevented from supplying their starving populations and their thirsty machines with the bread and oil of the Ukraine and the Caucasus? These were questions that demanded immediate answers. One thing only was certain about the Bolsheviks: they were for peace. The rest was mere speculation. But it seemed at least highly probable that in six months they would be no more than an evil memory. A govern-

ment imbued with other, and saner, principles would have taken their place, or else complete anarchy would ensue. In six months, however, a lot could happen. The war might be won or lost. The destiny of the world for generations to come might be altered according to whether Germany would, or would not, succeed in exploiting her good fortune in the East quickly enough.

At the same time, it must be admitted that Allied opinions about the Bolsheviks were crude and partial. They were neither German agents nor crazy fanatics. On the contrary they were, most of them, men of exceptional ability and integrity. Otherwise, how could they have founded the Soviet Union of today? They might be fanatics; but not all fanatics are crazy. They are persons inspired by an idea to pursue it at any cost to themselves and others. In the pursuit, although their objective may be unattainable, they sometimes achieve more valuable results than could ever have been reached by the pedestrian methods of sober people. The Bolsheviks were intent on creating a new and better society on earth. In order to do so they must first obtain political power, since there could be no advance until the middle-class state, which existed in order to support the capitalist system, was overthrown and the dictatorship of the proletariat established. And they were ready to sacrifice the national interests of their own country, if by setting up, even temporarily, a revolutionary government there a spark might be struck that would set all Europe, and then the world, ablaze. However backward Russia might be compared with the highly developed capitalist nations, France, Germany, England and the United States, the flame would spread westwards and once properly alight could never be extinguished. Regarding, as he did, the war not as a Russian but as a socialist, and German capitalists as neither more nor less inimical than British or American to the cause in which he believed, Lenin had no sense of loyalty to the latter nor any objection of principle to treating with the former. There could not, of course, be a real peace between Bolsheviks and capitalists of any nationality. Either Bolshevism or capitalism must in the long run perish. But a truce would give the new government time to get a firm grip on the levers of administration in the former Russian Empire. Moreover, in the conditions that prevailed in Russia, peace was not merely desirable. It was absolutely essential. Lenin knew that his party had triumphed because they had advocated an immediate ending of the war, not because the masses were converted to their ideals. The people longed for peace from the bottom of its heart; and the army, in Lenin's words, had voted for peace with its legs. While other parties had hesitated and equivocated, the Bolsheviks had promised to give the workers and soldiers what they wanted. They could not hope to survive without fulfilling their promise, by making peace, at any price, by any means and without delay. No Russian government, whatever its political colour, could have kept the country at war with the Central Powers.

It was pointed out to the Allied governments by their representatives on the spot that a separate peace had become inevitable, and that the

wiser course would be to acquiesce in something that could not be altered and so avoid incurring the hostility of the Bolshevik masters of Russia. But the argument did not carry conviction. The Allies were under no obligation to Lenin and his colleagues, neither desired their friendship nor believed in their permanence, and had no confidence that, even if they wished, they would be able to offer serious opposition to German penetration of Russian territory. What reasons existed for fearing the anger of these eccentric individuals? To have any open truck with them would only stimulate extreme pacifism, already disquieting, among the working class in the Allied countries. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks could not claim to control more than a portion of the dominions of Nicholas II. The Allied governments were willing, unofficially and provisionally, to recognize their rule in those parts of Russia of which they had undisputed possession; but by no means to acknowledge their right to recognition elsewhere, in preference to White generals and other elements faithful to the alliance with the Western Powers. Russia, it appeared, was falling to pieces in irretrievable ruin. The Allies could not arrest the process even if they tried. And, should a separate peace be inevitable, might a chaotic Russia not suit Allied purposes better than an orderly one?

The policy thus decided upon was easier to initiate than to end, and had immense and damaging effects out of all proportion to the advantage that it actually brought the Allies. Yet its authors can hardly be blamed for striving above all else to prevent Russia becoming a free field for German exploitation. How the Germans would make use of the opportunity afforded by Russia's collapse remained to be seen. The fact that they had too little time, before their own defeat, to employ it fully could not be anticipated. The war, for all that anybody could then tell, might last, not one more year, but four or five at least. Why should not Germany, supreme from the North Sea to the Bering Strait, from the Arctic Ocean to the Pamirs, prolong it indefinitely?

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RED MENACE (1917—1924)

#### § 1. *The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and Allied Intervention*

A FEW hours after the Bolshevik government had been formed at Petrograd, Trotsky, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, issued a wireless appeal to all the belligerent nations to make peace forthwith, a just peace without annexations or indemnities. The belligerents paid no heed to this gesture. But the next move of the Soviet government showed it to be more than a mere gesture. The commander-in-chief of the Russian armies was relieved of his post and replaced by a Bolshevik officer, and it was announced that negotiations would be begun at once for the conclusion of an armistice on the Russian fronts. At the same

time, Trotsky invited the Allied Powers to enter into communication with their enemies in all the other theatres of war, so that a general peace might be brought about. The Central Powers eagerly accepted the Soviet proposal. They had everything to gain by the cessation of fighting in the East and were impatient to begin transferring their forces, immobilized opposite the dissolving Russian armies, to the Western front for a final knock-out blow before the Americans arrived in strength. Equally urgent was the question of food supplies. Austrian ministers considered that, without corn from the Ukraine, a revolution in their country was probable within a matter of weeks. The Allies, on the other hand, indignantly refused the Russian suggestion. To have done otherwise would have been as if Britain had agreed to discuss terms of peace with Hitler on the fall of France in 1940.

The Bolsheviks, or Communists as they now called themselves, were physically powerless in face of the German war machine; but they acted in a spirit very different from the self-abasement of Vichy. For they possessed a moral weapon of enormous possibilities, the weapon of propaganda, which they knew how to use with remarkable skill and vigour. Nor did they direct it only against their nominal enemies, the Central Powers. With lofty impartiality they attacked all capitalist governments alike. The Allies were called upon to state openly, if they would not discuss peace, for what purposes the people of Europe must bleed for a fourth year of war. Their Asiatic subjects were incited to revolt. The secret treaties made by the Tsarist government were published, denounced and annulled, to the embarrassment and fury of London and Paris. In a word, the Communists broke every rule of international intercourse and good taste as flagrantly and calmly as they flouted every principle of social and economic orthodoxy. To the ordinary statesmen of that epoch they seemed purely destructive and absurd, even devilish. But what appeared to the political academicians perversity was really originality. The world has never been, and can never be, the same since November, 1917. Originality is always uncomfortable. The early Bolsheviks had the defects of their qualities, intolerance, inhumanity, a plenitude of wild ideas. They hated the capitalist and imperialist robbers, as they called other governments, with comprehensive virulence. It is no wonder that their hatred was returned, or that the secret of their propaganda was learnt and used against the inventors.

Suppressing shudders of aristocratic discomfort, the representatives of imperial Germany and Austria took their seats round the table at Brest-Litovsk with the strangest crew that had ever been seen at a diplomatic conference. There were seedy intellectuals, agitators who had known the insides of half the prisons of Europe, a female terrorist, an erudite historian, and by way of ornament, a soldier, sailor, workman and peasant, the last complete with grey locks and a primeval beard. Soon Trotsky himself appeared on the scene, a formidable, loquacious, dramatic personality. Bolshevik diplomatic methods were as disconcerting as their envoys. Unwarily, the Central Powers allowed it to be

provided in the armistice terms that "an exchange of views and newspapers" might take place between the opposing armies. The opening was seized to distribute to the German and Austrian troops innumerable propaganda sheets containing every sort of argument calculated to turn them against their governments and their officers. The Soviet delegates arriving at Brest-Litovsk even threw pamphlets out of the windows of their railway carriages to German soldiers. In a public statement before the conference began, Trotsky declared that the aims of Soviet Russia would be to end the shameless and criminal war which was ruining Europe, and assist the working classes of all belligerent countries to overthrow their imperialist rulers and make possible a democratic peace. The German Kaiser, he said, was a tyrant towards whom, even while it negotiated with Germany, the Communist government preserved an irreconcilable enmity.

Statesmen and generals of the Central Powers did not relish these extraordinary tactics. But they failed to realize how seriously their weary and half-demoralized armies and civilian populations would catch the infection. They despised the Bolshevik adversary too much to listen to his raving. What harm would insults do, anyway, except to the madmen who indulged in them? Their country was helpless, and Germany and her allies could impose what terms they desired. They proceeded to dictate conditions of peace compared to which the Treaty of Versailles is a monument of generosity. Russia was to be stripped of her western and southern provinces acquired since the seventeenth century, to be crippled and impoverished. Her losses, under the Brest-Litovsk terms, would have amounted to one-third of her population and arable land, half of her industrial equipment, three-quarters of her iron and coal mines. Had the treaty been carried into operation, the Russia that remained could not have escaped becoming a German dependency. The Allies did not prove to be friends to Soviet Russia after they had won the war, but by cancelling the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk they did her a service that infinitely outweighed all the injuries they inflicted.

The conditions of peace imposed by the Central Powers filled the Communist leaders with consternation. They had been prepared for hard terms; but these were monstrous. The first reaction, under Trotsky's influence, was to reject them, without continuing to fight, which they were in no position to do. There should be no peace and no war. It was an ingenious policy of bluff, intended to demonstrate to the world the rapacity of German militarism and prove that the Communists were not its tools. But, as Lenin pointed out with relentless logic, the policy would not work. The Germans advanced towards Petrograd, meeting with no effective opposition, and, after heated debate in the inner circle of the Communist Party, the Soviet government gave way and signed the treaty. Thereupon the German advance on Petrograd stopped. But a separate peace had been made with the Ukraine, and, on the pretext of bringing aid to the puppet Ukrainian government, German and Austrian troops pushed forward through southern Russia as far as the River Don in search of corn, fats and other foodstuffs for their



hungry peoples at home. Another German force crossed the Black Sea and occupied Georgia, where it set up an independent state under German protection. Baku and its oilfields, whose produce was so badly needed by German aeroplanes, submarines and machines of every kind, were the next objective. The Turks, however, forestalled their ally.

Meanwhile German troops had overrun the Baltic provinces of Russia, which it was intended to make permanent dependencies of the Reich, and had landed in Finland in order to suppress a Finnish Soviet government and re-establish the rule of its White opponents. Finland also became a German protectorate. About this time the Germans seem to have been in two minds, or so Communists thought, whether or not to march on Moscow, which had become the Soviet capital, and treat the Russian Reds in the same way as the Finnish. A handful of men would have sufficed, for the Red Army was in its infancy and the government had scarcely any means of protection. Lenin therefore turned secretly to negotiate with Allied agents, offering economic concessions, asking for advice and assistance in organizing the Red Army, and hinting that he would not oppose an Allied expedition to the Arctic coast with the purpose of countering the Germans and Finnish Whites in the region.

The Allies, naturally, did not discourage these propositions. But they were not content with half-measures, especially since they entirely distrusted Soviet sincerity. Brest-Litovsk made them more determined than ever, with or without Bolshevik approval, to create another Eastern front, or fronts, as soon as they were able; or at least to stir up sufficient trouble to keep the enemy occupied to some extent in his rear. It cannot be said that strenuous efforts were made to obtain the consent of Moscow to their intervention. Even had they been inclined to pay regard to Bolshevik feelings, the circumstances of utter confusion that existed all over the former Tsarist Empire gave an excuse for dispensing with ceremony. Whatever Bolshevik leaders might say, it seemed certain that they could not welcome the use of Russian territory as a battleground by opposing belligerents. The belief of some Allied agents in Russia that the Soviet government might be induced by hatred of German encroachments to join hands with the allies of Tsarism was ingenuous. The Bolsheviks hated the German invaders, but they feared them more than their enemies and would not cut their own throats by openly breaking the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

In seeking to bring the war between Russia and the Central Powers to an end, Lenin had made a virtue of necessity. But he hoped the treaty would afford a breathing-space pending the arrival of that universal revolt of the masses against their capitalist rulers in which he placed his faith. To extend the breathing space was now the sole means by which Communism could survive. The present situation was precarious in the extreme. Besides Germans, Austrians and Turks, occupying wide areas of what had once been Russian territory in a great arc from Finland to the shores of the Caspian, a multitude of domestic opponents existed, from reactionary Tsarist generals to left-wing Social Revolutionaries

for whom the Communists were not extreme enough. The government of Moscow saw itself already in grave danger of being ground to powder between the pressure of the Central Powers on one side, the Whites on another and the enemy from within. The Whites, that is to say everyone politically to the right of the Communists, were nearly all pro-Ally. It was easy to foresee that the Allies, if they too intervened, would try to combine with their friends; and the pressure would be more dangerous than before. Hence Lenin's desire to divert Allied intervention towards northern Finland, where it might come into collision with the Germans and their Finnish associates without approaching the vital centres of Soviet power, or those parts where the Whites had their strength—namely, the south and east of Russia. So long as the adversaries of Communism were divided there was a chance of safety.

From the Allied point of view there were two main avenues of approach to Russia which might be utilized in the construction of a new Eastern front, the northern ports of Archangel and Murmansk and the Pacific port of Vladivostok. The latter, though the more distant, was the more promising, especially if Japan should land substantial forces there. Japan was delighted to oblige. She had already taken advantage of the European war and her alliance with Britain to drive the Germans from Shantung and present to China the notorious Twenty-One Demands. She asked nothing better than to have a pretext to use Russia's weakness for her own ends. The difficulty was American recalcitrance. Americans possessed a much more accurate knowledge of the extent of Japanese ambitions than Europeans, to whom the Pacific, then as now, appeared a minor theatre. Since the Russo-Japanese War, opinion in the United States had swung against Japan, and the Twenty-One Demands had made a deep impression at a time when Europe had been too busy to give them thought. It was plain to Americans that, once Japanese forces were allowed into Russian territory in the Far East, it would be hard to get them out again.

On March 16th, 1918, after an Allied conference held in London, a dispatch was transmitted to Washington in the names of the British, French and Italian governments, urgently demanding American consent to Japanese intervention on a large scale in Siberia. It happened to be the same day on which the Congress of Soviets, meeting at Moscow, finally upheld Lenin's policy towards the Central Powers and ratified by a three to one majority the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk. It was also the eve of Ludendorff's great attack, made possible by reinforcements brought during the winter from the Eastern front, on the British in France, the beginning of Germany's supreme effort to force a decision in the West before it became too late. While the Western Powers were now in no position to spare men for expeditions to Russia, their need to keep the enemy busy there was greater than ever. Unfortunately, President Wilson proved obdurate, and for the time being the plan had to be abandoned.

Before the Bolsheviks obtained power in Russia, a Czecho-Slovak corps had been organized out of Austro-Hungarian Slavs who had been

captured or had deserted to the Russian side. These troops, some 60,000 or 70,000 strong, maintained their cohesion and discipline after the November Revolution and fought, under British and French influence, against the Germans in the Ukraine. The Czecho-Slovaks played an important part in the history of Allied intervention in Russia during 1918. It was their original intention, when it became clear that Russia would make peace with the Central Powers, to get out of the country by Vladivostok or Archangel and make their way to France in order to continue the struggle for national independence. Accordingly, by agreement with Moscow, they began to move northwards up the Volga and eastwards by the Trans-Siberian railway. But before long, for one reason or another, they quarrelled with the Communists and seized strategic points in the middle Volga region and all along the railway line, which eventually came under their control right across Siberia. Everywhere they overthrew Soviet rule and set up White authorities instead. If Allied troops could be made available in northern Russia and the Far East, it might now be possible for them to join the Czecho-Slovaks in Siberia and on the Volga, secure all Asiatic Russia against German penetration, and either coerce the Moscow government into adopting an anti-German policy or replace it by a pro-Ally White government. The latter alternative was no doubt the more congenial, and certainly the more probable. By this time the position in the West did not look so alarming as it had a month or two previously, and a few thousand men at least could be sent. The first contingent arrived at Murmansk and in the beginning of August a force landed, after some fighting, at Archangel, dispersed the local Soviet and established a White administration. Simultaneously, the Czecho-Slovaks occupied Kazan, on the Volga due east of Moscow. Soon afterwards, American opposition having been at length overcome, small numbers of American, British and French and much larger numbers of Japanese troops disembarked at Vladivostok and entrained for Siberia. Allied intervention was in full swing.

Communist fortunes sank to their lowest depth. On every side unfriendly belligerents and more than unfriendly Whites surrounded the occupants of the Kremlin, and even inside the narrow territory over which they still ruled they lived in continual apprehension of conspiracies and risings. It was true that, as relations with the Allies deteriorated, those with the Central Powers showed signs of improving. The German offensives in the West had failed and defeat stared Ludendorff in the face. Although the High Command and the government hardly yet knew the extent of the approaching disaster, Germany had every motive to avoid becoming further embroiled in Russia and to prefer the neutral Reds to the pro-Ally Whites. But she had not the means now to support the Moscow government. And the weaker the Central Powers, the more hostile would the Allies assuredly prove themselves.

At the end of this month the worst moment of all came, with the attempted assassination of Lenin by a female Social Revolutionary.

Martial law was proclaimed and the Red Terror let loose. Moscow in the first days of September, 1918, repeated the Parisian massacres of September, 1792. The Allied invasion of Russia, coming on top of other troubles, caused the same reaction of panic and fury as the Austrian and Prussian invaders of France had produced in the minds of earlier regenerators of humanity. Lenin's wound was the last straw. Until then, the Russian Revolution, like the French in its first stages, had been comparatively bloodless and even good-natured. But when Communists saw their leaders shot down one after another by assassins, their cause on the verge of ruin, themselves a step from extermination at the hands of White enemies or Allied soldiers, desperation removed all their scruples. At the same time it nerved them to make a final effort. The crisis passed, and henceforward things went better. Lenin recovered. The Allied landing at Archangel had been too late and in too little strength to make a junction with the Czecho-Slovak forces. The young Red Army, ragged, scantily equipped, but inspired by an ideal with energy and fighting spirit, was able to keep the Allies in check and beat back the Czecho-Slovaks. Autumn came, and with it a respite for the defenders of Moscow.

Autumn brought also the surrender one after another of the Central Powers to Allied arms, ending with Germany herself. The news was greeted in Moscow with an excitement as great as that displayed in the victorious countries, but for a different reason. The fall of world capitalism appeared in sight. Everywhere in central Europe there were mutinies, disorders, abdications, revolutions. The proletariat seemed on the point of destroying its oppressors in Berlin and the Ruhr, in Vienna and Budapest. Soon the plutocrats of Paris and London would be trembling in their turn. In a few months all Europe might be liberated. Yet anxiety was mixed with exultation in Bolshevik hearts. What would the Allied militarists do? Suppose a bargain should be struck between them and German generals by which Germany, in return for other sacrifices, obtained a free hand in the East, so as to extirpate the common foe of bourgeois Europe. Suppose, alternatively, that a great Allied offensive should be opened against Soviet Russia with those armies which, now that the Central Powers were helpless, could be directed eastwards in overwhelming numbers. These fears were exaggerated, but not groundless.

## § 2. *The Russian Civil War*

Under the armistice terms imposed upon the Central Powers, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was annulled and their troops were obliged to retire from all the territories of imperial Russia. The Allies, however, had no intention either of withdrawing their own troops from Russian soil or of permitting the Bolsheviks to step into the void left by the retreating Germans, Austrians and Turks. As soon as the Straits were opened, Allied fleets entered the Black Sea. A British force landed at Batum; another, coming from Persia, occupied Baku; and before long

the railway connecting the two ports, and then all Transcaucasia, came under British control. While the British took the Caucasus as their sphere, the French established themselves in the Ukraine and the Crimea. At the same time, the Allied armies at Murmansk, Archangel and east of the Volga were maintained, and further aid and comfort was given to the Whites, who were becoming more and more reactionary and less and less representative of any major section of Russian opinion.

What explanation or justification could there be for this strange manner of exhibiting Allied devotion to the principles of national self-determination and democracy? It might be said that, while the winter lasted, the garrisons in the Arctic and Siberia were frozen in and could not be evacuated. That argument did not account for landings in the Caucasus and Ukraine, and elsewhere. But, it was urged, we were morally committed to the support of the Whites and could not abandon them merely because our own war against the Central Powers had come to an end. There was more force in this contention. Once Allied intervention in Russia had been decided upon, it could not but take the form of warfare, at the side of White counter-revolutionaries, against the Communist government of Moscow. By leaving them to Bolshevik mercy the moment they had served our purpose against the Central Powers, we should expose ourselves to the same reproaches that we had levelled against the Bolsheviks for deserting the Allied cause and making a separate peace with the enemy. Yet it is impossible to assert that consideration for the Whites was the whole, or the main, reason for the continuation of Allied intervention after Germany had given in.

During the last weeks of the World War and the winter of 1918-1919, while the Allied Powers were deliberating at Paris, Communism was the constant nightmare of their statesmen. Is it surprising that they were disturbed, when they saw all central Europe in danger of going Red under the influence of the insidious propaganda of Moscow, and heard Communist leaders talk of sending a million Red soldiers into the heart of the Continent to help the workers rise against their masters? Even in the Allied countries there were grave symptoms. In Britain, for example, a ferment existed among the working class and the troops eager to get back to civilian life. Riots took place in London, Glasgow, Belfast and other towns. For two days Calais was in the hands of an armed mob of British soldiers. Russian example and inspiration were blamed for these occurrences, which might well have had more serious consequences than they did. We have only to look, as evidence of the concern felt by democratic rulers, at the celebrated Lloyd George memorandum of March, 1919, written at a critical moment of the Peace Conference. If Germany, the British Prime Minister argued, went over to the extremists, as appeared very probable, "it is inevitable that she should throw in her lot with the Russian Bolsheviks. Once that happens, all Eastern Europe will be swept into the orbit of the Bolshevik revolution, and within a year we may witness the spectacle of nearly three hundred million people, organized into a vast Red army under German instructors and German generals, equipped with German cannon and

German machine guns, and prepared for a renewal of the attack on western Europe." These fantastic terrors in the breasts of the omnipotent victors were the counterpart of Communist fears, more comprehensible in their weak position, of an alliance between German and Allied militarists to crush Soviet rule.

Apprehension and hatred of Bolshevism became at this epoch a universal obsession, that called forth violent repressive steps where the danger seemed most acute, and political reaction of more or less severity on the part of other governments. There was general agreement among statesmen that measures must be taken against the Muscovite plague. The question was, what measures? Three schools of thought existed. The first and simplest appealed, as might be expected, to the soldiers. Let an Allied army assemble in Poland, march into Russia, drive the Reds from their capital, and instal a respectable government. A couple of hundred thousand men would suffice, in conjunction with anti-Bolsheviks now in the field. The difficulty of this plan was to find the necessary troops, comparatively small as the numbers required might be. Clemenceau refused to send any more French, and Lloyd George any more British. Marshal Foch suggested American; but President Wilson declined. None of the Allied governments felt prepared for military adventures in the vast spaces of eastern Europe, beyond the strictly limited commitments in which they had already become involved. The French and British were exhausted by the efforts and sacrifices of the last four years. Their troops would mutiny, it was feared, if they were told that, having conquered Germany, they must set out to conquer Russia next. As for Wilson, he had other ideas of the proper way to combat Bolshevism.

The second plan was to give such moral and material support and encouragement as could conveniently be spared to the Whites and the border nations, Poles and the rest, against the Bolsheviks, in the hope that they would be starved out or destroyed without direct Allied participation on any considerable scale. Or, at least, that the enemies of mankind would be hemmed in on all sides by hostile forces, so as to isolate them from the world and prevent the infection from spreading. This was the policy of the "cordon sanitaire," a French invention. It was that which was actually adopted.

A third method of dealing with Bolshevism attracted President Wilson, and also Lloyd George. As a spiritual disease, it must be treated with spiritual medicaments. To attempt to overcome these deluded people by force would be a mistake. Socialist and liberal sympathy in other countries would be aroused on their behalf; political fever at home would increase; and the struggle of classes, which was beginning to grow more bitter with the conclusion of war, would be intensified. Even if it were suppressed in Moscow, Bolshevism would break out in other quarters, perhaps more dangerously than ever, the fanaticism of its adherents sharpened by persecution. Had foreign intervention not been the cause of the aggressive wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon? Moreover, it seemed clear that great numbers of Russians

believed in the Soviet government. No doubt the Bolsheviks were a minority and had seized power in Russia by means repugnant to liberal principles. But did they not represent the people as a whole at least better than their opponents? It would be both a crime and a blunder, if so, to expel them and force upon the Russian people rulers abhorrent to it. There was no alternative government to the Bolshevik in sight; only an incoherent medley of militarists and adventurers, who inspired small confidence that they could set up a stable administration. And if they did, it would probably be a reactionary one, a return to Tsarism in its most tyrannical and backward shape. Perhaps, if the Bolsheviks were treated reasonably they might behave reasonably. At the worst the virulence of their propaganda would be abated and their foreign sympathisers appeased. Would it not be better, before outlawing Moscow, to try to come to terms with it and hear what its spokesmen had to say?

These were wise ideas. But the notion of parleying with Bolshevism was detested by far the greater part of Allied opinion, and even Wilson and Lloyd George had little conviction of its practicability. Wilson confessed that Russia constituted a problem to which he did not pretend to know the solution. Lloyd George was inconsequent and vague. He did not feel quite sure whether Kharkov was a town or a White general. Both statesmen were too preoccupied with other subjects to make up their minds about Russia. It seemed easier to let events take their course, to allow intervention, that is to say, go on. A half-hearted attempt was made at conciliation by inviting Bolsheviks and anti-Bolsheviks to a conference on the island of Prinkipo in the Sea of Marmora; an invitation that the Reds accepted and the Whites refused. It came to nothing. Moscow, desirous above all of gaining time, would have gone a long way in making concessions. Lenin was as flexible in his choice of means as he was unswerving in his ultimate aims. With the Allies and the new states that were rising on the periphery of imperial Russia an accommodation might have been reached. But between Russian Whites and Reds the struggle was to the death, without possibility of compromise or pity; and the Whites would have persisted in their endeavours without Allied support or approval, even against the Allies if need be.

There were, in reality, only two courses open to the Allies in the circumstances that existed. One was to continue their limited intervention in favour of the anti-Bolsheviks, with more or less vigour and to a greater or smaller extent, by supplying them with munitions of war and technical advice and assistance. The other, and more difficult, was to withdraw immediately and completely from Russian territory and abstain rigidly from interference in the quarrel between the Communist government and its White opponents, using Allied influence to compose the differences of the border nations with each other and whichever party obtained the upper hand in Russia proper. The former alternative was chosen. It failed in its primary purpose; but succeeded in the end in isolating Bolshevism, stopping its spread and establishing a "cordon sanitaire" between Soviet Russia and central

Europe, in the form of a string of minor states from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea.

This relative success could not be won without paying a price. The least expensive part of the policy of intervention consisted in the millions of pounds and hundreds of millions of francs that it cost British and French taxpayers. It was inevitable, in any event, that there should be civil war in Russia. And it was inevitable that there should be a gulf, hard to bridge, between capitalist democracy and proletarian dictatorship. They were two worlds wholly antipathetic to each other and only time could bring mutual toleration. But by encouraging and helping the counter-revolutionaries the Allies made the gulf much wider than it otherwise would have been. They awakened in Communist minds and hearts an indelible suspicion, a morbid hostility towards the Western democracies. They obliged the Soviet government in self-defence to do all in its power to stir up trouble for them, with the defeated Central Powers, in their colonial possessions, among their own people at home. They only prolonged the agony of the Whites. They multiplied suffering, bloodshed, devastation in Russia. They stimulated the appetite of her neighbours, and the illusions of every nationalist fraction of the Tsarist Empire. They delayed the settlement of the Continent and postponed, until it was too late, Russia's return to her due place as a great Power in the councils of Europe. In so doing, they made a large contribution towards the outbreak, twenty years afterwards, of a second World War.

In the spring of 1919 Moscow alternated between confidence and dejection. On the one hand, the prospects of a collapse of capitalism all over Europe were bright. Red uprisings occurred in Bavaria and Hungary while the Peace Conference debated at Paris, the temper of the working classes everywhere grew more agitated and refractory, the bourgeoisie shivered. Communist propaganda was operating on French and British minions of capitalism in the same way as earlier on German and Austrian. A mutiny occurred in the French Black Sea fleet. French troops had to be evacuated from the Ukraine, partly because they were too few and unreliable, partly because of opposition in France to the expedition. The Allied force in northern Russia, predominantly British, was dispirited and disaffected. In Siberia the Czecho-Slovaks showed symptoms of demoralization. On the other hand, the White generals, with Allied and also, in the Baltic region, German aid, were consolidating, and already launching, their armies from the south, east and north-west.

First, danger threatened in the east, where Kolchak advanced towards the Volga from the Urals. Then Denikin marched from the Ukraine on Moscow, and Yudenitch on Petrograd from the Baltic. Their armies were supplied with Allied military advisers and instructors, depended on great quantities of Allied munitions and were financed by Allied gold. It was to Britain above all that the White leaders, especially Denikin, were indebted for this assistance, and the most energetic Allied supporter of their cause was the British Secretary for



War, Winston Churchill. British fleets were masters of the Baltic and Black Seas and took an active part in operations against the Reds. Fresh British reinforcements were dispatched to Archangel, on the excuse of preparing the way for withdrawal of Allied troops from northern Russia. There they stood ready to act on Kolchak's right flank. British diplomacy worked to co-ordinate the various White factions and induce them to accept a common and feasible political programme.

Kolchak won, to begin with, some important successes. Later in the year Denikin got beyond Orel, to within two hundred miles of Moscow, and Yudenitch penetrated to the suburbs of Petrograd. The Communists were again encircled. All contact was lost with the outside world, which, in any case, wanted nothing better than to blockade and boycott them. Disease, starvation, shortage of food and clothing, of every necessity enfeebled them. Their backs were to the wall, as in the previous summer. Besides the Whites and the Allied expeditionary forces, they had to face the hostility of Finns, Baltic peoples, Poles, Ukrainian nationalists and Roumanians. Again, they fought with the courage and fury of despair; and they were victorious. Kolchak was hurled back to the Urals and pursued through Siberia as far as Lake Baikal. Denikin's army was beaten and forced to retreat to the Caucasus. Yudenitch was driven away from Petrograd. The British abandoned Murmansk and Archangel and sailed for home. By the second anniversary of Bolshevik rule the worst perils had been overcome, though next year would bring other attacks. But Communist hopes, as well as fears, had been disappointed. The expected proletarian revolutions in Europe did not mature, or were suppressed. The peace treaty with Germany was signed. Capitalism still stood. The world showed signs of settling down.

Fundamentally, Communism survived and defeated its White opponents because it represented better than they the will of the majority of Russians, both in the towns and the villages. Urban workers were prepared to fight and go cold and hungry rather than submit to become wage slaves once more. Peasants preferred Reds who left them in possession of the land to Whites who, they were convinced, would bring the landlords back with them. Both believed, not without good reason, that the fall of the Soviet government would mean a restoration of the old order, and all its abuses and deficiencies. The Communists, however, had other advantages without which they could not have triumphed. They were united and disciplined, endowed with a passionate faith and under efficient and determined leadership. They held the two chief cities and their central position enabled them to concentrate their forces against each hostile army in turn. Their enemies had none of these advantages. Antagonism to the Bolsheviks was the only matter about which they agreed. The White generals were politically inexperienced and incapable. Geographically, the Whites were handicapped by the long distances it was necessary to cover as they advanced. The further from their bases the weaker they got. Nor could they ever effect a junction with each other or the British in the north. Moreover, they

were seriously at odds with the border nations and nationalist groups involved in the chaotic Russian struggle. It was the avowed aim of the Whites to recover all, or nearly all, the imperial territories lost since the Revolution began. This aim, which they would not, and could not, surrender, was obviously incompatible with the aspirations of the border peoples. The latter, therefore, were not likely to do much to help the Whites dispossess the Reds, who, as Brest-Litovsk showed, would consent to the most drastic territorial sacrifices, if only Communist rule could be preserved.

Efforts were made by the Allies, without much vigour or success, to reconcile Whites and other anti-Bolshevist forces. The Allies, indeed, for their part showed themselves far from resolute or harmonious in their Russian policies. Japan was interested only in eastern Siberia and the Pacific coast. The United States was interested mainly in obstructing the Japanese. France was more eager to set up client states to stand guard on Germany in eastern Europe than to encourage a revival of Russian imperialism. Even Britain, the principal supporter of the Whites, was not single-minded. The Prime Minister obstinately refused to believe in intervention. He considered Churchill's anti-Bolshevist policy over-expensive and politically a liability. Britain's position, in Ireland, India, Egypt and elsewhere had become, in the year 1919, too difficult to make entanglements in countries as remote from British concern as Russia desirable or popular. Particularly an entanglement with so much political dynamite attached to it. Nor, for different reasons from the French, did the prospect of a rebirth of imperial Russia seem welcome to the British.

That old enemy of Russia, Curzon, had returned as Secretary of State to the Foreign Office, where in the eighteen-nineties, before going out to India, he had been Under-Secretary to Lord Salisbury. His ideas remained those of an Under-Secretary to Lord Salisbury. The time had come, and the opportunity, to put into effect a scheme that Curzon had long cherished for the permanent destruction of Russian influence in the Middle East, especially in Persia; and for the erection of that country into a satellite state under British guidance to ensure control of the Persian Gulf and the western approaches to India. The final dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the installation of British rule in Palestine and Iraq were steps towards the end he had in view. Domination over Persia might follow, and, if the Russian Empire went the same way as the Ottoman and Austrian, could be maintained cheaply. Russia's pre-war influence on Persia had been founded on her possession of the contiguous Transcaucasian and Transcaspian regions. It was highly desirable, if not essential, that the Transcaucasian states that had detached themselves from Russia after the Revolution should preserve their autonomy, and that Russia's hold on Transcaspia and central Asia should be relaxed. Thus the Allied Powers, with the possible exception of the United States, had motives for preferring a weak to a powerful Russia; and consequently for being lukewarm in their attitude towards the White crusade against Bolshevism.

They wanted Communist rule overthrown, but each was eager not to deprive the others of the honour and cost of overthrowing it. And they were not at all sure what they desired to put in its place.

§ 3. *Communism and the capitalist world begin to accept one another—  
Return of Anglo-Russian enmity in Asia*

In supposing Russian Reds to be a lesser peril than Russian Whites, the border nations calculated rightly. After disposing of Kolchak, Yudenitch and Denikin, Moscow proceeded to make peace, on terms very favourable to them, with all but one of the western border states. The exception was the strongest, Poland. It was not the fault of the Soviet government, which made repeated attempts to satisfy Poland. The Poles, under Pilsudski's influence, refused. They had conceived an idea of the most ambitious order, nothing less than a resurrection, not merely of the ancient Poland of the eighteenth century, but of the fabulous kingdom of the sixteenth, that stretched far to the east of the river Dnieper. This was megalomania. No Russian government, Red, White or other, could possibly tolerate a Poland extending to the Donetz basin and cutting Russia off from the Black Sea, any more than a nominally independent Ukraine under German domination. It would mean the end of Russia.

While the Russian Civil War raged, Pilsudski remained quiescent, though menacing. But when the failure of the Whites became manifest and the danger of a Tsarist restoration seemed to have vanished, he decided to move and, marching into the Ukraine, took Kiev. Polish success did not last long. The Red Army counter-attacked and swept the Poles in sudden confusion before them for hundreds of miles. Russian troops were actually within sight of Warsaw before Pilsudski could make a stand and fling them back. It was a precarious moment for the Western Powers as well as for Poland. They had a vision of Poland sovietized, a huge Red Army advancing towards Berlin to join hands with the seething German proletariat and all Europe in flames. The danger was surmounted thanks chiefly to Poland's own efforts, helped by Communist mistakes. The Red Army had advanced too hastily and confidently, and Moscow deceived itself once more by an excessive belief in the revolutionary possibilities of other countries. Instead of welcoming the Red troops who had come to liberate them, Polish workers and peasants sided with the enemies of their class against the Russian invader. Nationalist feeling proved itself a heavier weapon than Marxist dogma, the Red Army was compelled to retreat as fast as it had come and Lenin chose to make peace rather than face another winter of war.

In coming to this decision he was influenced by the internal position in Russia and also by the fact that Communists had another foe to contend with. The last White general, Wrangel, had collected the remnants of Denikin's men in the south, and attacked from that direction

at the same time as Pilsudski from the west. By making peace with the Poles it became possible to bring superior forces to bear against Wrangel. He was driven into the Crimea, and thence his broken army fled in Russian and Allied ships, covered by the guns of the Royal Navy, towards Constantinople. The Civil War was over and foreign intervention dead. Russia's western boundaries stayed undisturbed until 1939 as they were now fixed. Only the Japanese in the Far East remained on Russian soil, and they would soon depart like the other Allies before them. After three years of murderous and fluctuating struggle, Communist rule was firmly and permanently established over the greater part of the former Tsarist Empire. The new frontiers in the west, however, were the result of necessity. They represented a serious loss and disadvantage to Soviet Russia, the price she had to pay the capitalist world for leaving her alone. The independence of Finland and the Baltic States meant that she found herself almost excluded from the Baltic Sea, with her second city strategically exposed. Roumania's seizure of Bessarabia, particularly resented and never acknowledged as lawful by Russians, put Odessa in a similar situation. Poland extended her territory more than a hundred miles to the east of the frontier, the so-called Curzon Line, that the Allies had tentatively drawn as her legitimate boundary and acquired a population of several millions of White Russians and Ukrainians, who had no desire to be placed under Polish rule.

In the Soviet-Polish conflict Britain and France exchanged places. While the French ardently supported the Poles, British sympathy, such as it was, for the anti-Bolshevist cause had waned as the White armies melted away the previous year; the Prinkipo policy came into favour again. Britain had little sympathy for Poland, and her rash aggression, followed by merited misfortune, was regarded by British Conservatives with indifference and by the British Left with hostility. The Labour movement set up a Council of Action to prevent the shipment of munitions to Poland and there were even rumours of a general strike. The Prime Minister himself had strong anti-Polish views; and Pilsudski's adventure came at an irritating moment, for Anglo-Soviet commercial negotiations had just been opened in London. When the Polish Premier arrived at the Spa Conference to beg the Allies for aid against the advancing Reds, Lloyd George met him with such outspoken reproaches that he returned from the interview in a state of nervous prostration. But as the Polish position became more and more serious the British government was forced, by the impending danger of Soviet penetration into central Europe, to fall into line with the French and promise succour to the Poles.

The Polish cloud passed and Lloyd George's thoughts recurred to his Russian negotiations. These eventuated in the Anglo-Russian Commercial Treaty of 1921, a landmark in the history of Communist relations with the outside world. For Britain was the first of the great Powers to enter into a trade agreement with the Soviet government, an example followed shortly by a number of other countries. Since

the Russian government had a monopoly of foreign trade, the agreement needed to be more than economic. In fact, it was explicitly political, purporting to be the preliminary to a general treaty between the two nations and providing for a mutual renunciation of military and diplomatic action or propaganda directed by one against the other. The two worlds, capitalist and Communist, were still antipathetic and would for many years continue to be. This constituted the first important sign that each had abandoned expectation of the other's immediate collapse. If they must exist side by side, it was obviously better that they should maintain tolerable relations rather than shun or scratch one another. Further, the two worlds had complementary needs. Soviet Russia's victory over her enemies had left her enfeebled and destitute. Capital, credits, technical assistance, machinery, equipment of all kinds were required to rebuild her ruined economy. These the capitalist West could provide. In return Russia had immense potential resources, as yet only in part developed, of timber, grain, oil and minerals for Western capitalists, harrassed by post-war difficulties, to exploit; and a population of over a hundred million for the idling industries of the West to supply. It could not be by chance that the Anglo-Soviet agreement and the conclusion of a Soviet-Polish peace treaty coincided with Lenin's New Economic Policy. Compromise with the external capitalist world accompanied compromise with capitalist principles at home. The original impetus of Communist exuberance was becoming exhausted.

There were no welcoming smiles at the Foreign Office for the Prime Minister's Russian treaty. Any traffic with the criminal government of Moscow seemed in that rarefied atmosphere unnecessary and regrettable. More substantial grounds of objection existed. The pre-war antagonism of the Russian and British Empires was returning in an unexpected form. In theory the Communists accepted the principle of national self-determination and allowed the right of any of the peoples of the Tsarist Empire to form an independent state. In practice, if Soviet treatment of the Ukraine and Georgia, and attempted treatment of the Baltic states and Poland, showed anything, Moscow had small inclination to permit real independence to the national minorities once subject to St. Petersburg. Soviet imperialism bore an increasing resemblance to Tsarist. If the former did not appear so aggressive as the latter, the reason might simply be that Soviet Russia still lacked the strength. She possessed in the meantime her novel weapon of propaganda, harder to parry and in some ways more effective than physical force. The end of the Civil War enabled the Bolsheviks to establish their rule in Asia virtually up to the limits of the old Empire. It was not an agreeable development to the British Foreign Secretary, who had hoped to see a series of little nations stretching from the Black Sea to the Hindu Kush under British influence and protection.

Curzon's hopes had been built up on a number of assumptions that at one time seemed solid enough. The first was that the Moslem peoples of the Middle East would consent to play the part assigned to

them; the second that Britain would have sufficient force available to persuade them, if they were reluctant. The third assumption was that an impotent and divided Russia would leave the field clear for British ascendancy. All these assumptions proved illusory. A few months after the German armistice the whole Moslem world was in a turmoil of nationalist frenzy. British troops were too much in demand in Europe and all over the Empire to be spared for any but the most vital points. And Russia repaid British favours to the Whites by stirring up anti-British feeling everywhere she could, especially in those countries that had served as fields of Anglo-Russian conflict before the Convention of 1907. After expelling White administrations from central Asia and Transcaucasia, the Communists were able to make direct contact with Afghan, Persian and Turkish nationalists and effectively to strengthen their powers of resistance to British imperialism.

The consequences were a complete failure of British designs in the Middle East. The Afghans, having made an unsuccessful but alarming attempt to invade India, succeeded in asserting their independence of British control. In Persia the fiasco was more spectacular. When the Ottoman Empire entered the World War on the side of the Central Powers, its final doom was decided by the Allies. A complicated and shady process of bargaining led, as far as Britain and Tsarist Russia were concerned, to agreement that Russia should have the Straits, with Constantinople, and an increase of territory in eastern Asia Minor; while Britain should take Iraq and Egypt, the last already hers in everything but name, and be given a free hand in Arabia south of a line from Cairo to Bagdad. South-western Persia, the neutral zone under the Anglo-Russian Convention, including the Gulf coastline and the oil-fields leased to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, was to be incorporated in the British sphere of influence. The fall of Tsarism augmented British responsibilities and with them British opportunities. By the end of 1918 the exigencies of war had drawn British forces into an occupation of all Persia. They had found their way beyond Persia's northern boundaries into central Asia and introduced British sea-power to the Caspian. They had been sent, it will be remembered, to hold the Batum-Baku line after the evacuation of German and Turkish troops under the armistice agreements. It would be too much to say that these moves were entirely destitute of ulterior significance. Without doubt they were prompted in the main, at first by the military necessity of combating the Central Powers and then by the need to hold Bolshevism in check and keep order in those regions, reduced by war and the Russian Revolution to chaotic misery. There was no serious intention to extend the British Empire to the Caucasus and the Caspian, much less to the Sea of Aral. But it could not be expected that Britain would renounce all the savoury prospects that the simultaneous ruin of the Ottoman and Tsarist Empires offered her. The Cabinet accepted Curzon's project of a semi-independent Persia under British tutelage, and an Anglo-Persian treaty embodying his ideas was signed in the summer of 1919 by a subservient Persian government.

In a few months, however, the situation had entirely altered. Curzon's self-congratulations over his diplomatic masterpiece were premature. The Treaty had not yet been ratified. While it was being concluded, Denikin was advancing on Moscow, the Bolsheviks were in extremities and British troops in Transcaucasia still guarded the northern frontier of Persia. Protests by Persian nationalists were overborne. But by the following spring Denikin had been put to flight, the Red Army in pursuit entered Baku, which British troops had just left, crossed the Caspian, landed on Persian territory and pushed the scanty British force into the interior. The combination of Communist propaganda and pressure by the Red Army was irresistible. Persian nationalists, listening to Soviet manifestoes and deciding that Russian imperialism constituted a lesser threat to their aims than British, gradually obtained the upper hand at Teheran and prevented ratification of the Anglo-Persian treaty. Ultimately the treaty was repudiated, in terms that added insult to injury, and a Perso-Soviet treaty substituted for it. Curzon's discomfiture was complete and his exasperation at the Bolsheviks, for their share in the slaughter of his favourite offspring, bitter.

Then there was Turkey. Of all the peace treaties which the Allies imposed, or sought to impose, on the defeated Central Powers, the Turkish treaty may be called the most inequitable and ill-considered. It is true that the Ottoman Empire had been a poisonous anachronism, whose dissolution no one, not excepting the Turks themselves, had reason to regret. But this did not justify the brazen plans of spoliation that the Allies had in view, not only for the non-Turkish parts of the Sultan's dominions but for Turkish Anatolia, great slices of which were allotted to French, Italians and, worst of all from the Turkish point of view, Greeks. The morality of the abortive Treaty of Sèvres did not differ from that of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. It was not merely unjust but absurd, with its independent Armenia and autonomous Kurdistan, its international commissions to regulate what residuum of sovereignty the mutilated Turkish state retained, and other equally impracticable provisions. Under the leadership of the remarkable Kemal, a second Peter the Great, the Turks rebelled against the intolerable indignities that the Allies proposed to inflict on them. In this audacious undertaking they naturally had the sympathy of the Communists, who like them were not afraid to defy the Olympians of Paris.

In the beginning, the Soviet government could give only moral support to the Kemalists. But when Denikin was beaten, Baku occupied, and so direct communication opened with the Turks, Moscow furnished considerable amounts of war materials and lent military advisers. It was a crucial stage in the Turkish struggle for independence. The publication of the Treaty of Sèvres had filled Turkey's cup of resentment. A Greek army, with the encouragement of the Allied Supreme Council, had begun a successful offensive against Kemal's forces and thrust them back from the coast of the Aegean. Soviet sympathy, with the promise of an increasing flow of munitions, was an important factor in strengthening the Turkish will to resist, and from that time the hopes of the Kemalists

began to rise and the Greek cause to decline. Events were turning out uncomfortably for the Allies, particularly for the British, the chief instigators of Greek aggression.

A resemblance may be noticed between the Polish adventure in Russia and the Greek in Turkey. Both Poles and Greeks suffered from megalomania. But they were not alone to blame. For to some extent they were tools of the great Allied Powers, the Poles of France and the Greeks of Britain. When the Russian Whites showed themselves a useless instrument for breaking Bolshevism, France put her faith in Pilsudski. Britain believed that Venizelos would relieve her of the trouble of bringing Kemal to heel. It is only fair to Curzon to say that the unhappy Greek policy was not his, but Lloyd George's. The Prime Minister was fascinated by Venizelos and loathed the Turks even more than the Poles. But he did not let himself be guided merely by sentimental considerations. Suspicion existed on this side of the Channel that, in backing Poland, France was more concerned with French interests in eastern Europe than with destroying Bolshevism. The French returned the compliment by accusing Britain of supporting the Greeks for her own imperialist ends in the Mediterranean. Both suggestions contained some truth. As much, perhaps, as the charge that Communist help was bestowed on Asiatic nationalists out of rivalry with Western imperialism rather than pity for its victims. There is little profit, however, in scrutinizing too closely the motives by which governments are actuated. They are seldom pure. The undeniable fact was that the Allies proved themselves enemies of Turkey and other Moslem nations, and Soviet Russia a friend.

Besides the assistance it gave to Persian and Turkish nationalists, the irruption of the Red Army into Transcaucasia settled the fate of the embryo states striving for existence south of the Caucasus. Communists and Kemalists united in dislike of them. There were also repercussions further off, for example an insurrection against British rule in Iraq. No wonder the Bolsheviks were unpopular at the Foreign Office. On the very same day that the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement was signed in London a treaty was concluded in Moscow between Russia and Turkey, by which the two countries fixed their mutual frontiers and proclaimed their solidarity in the struggle against imperialism. It was the latest of a series of treaties, between Russia and Afghanistan, Russia and Persia and Turkey and Afghanistan, which, under Muscovite influence, regulated the relations of the Moslem states with each other and Soviet Russia. Were these treaties not in themselves acts of propaganda aimed against British interests in the Middle East, in violation of the pledge given in the Anglo-Soviet agreement? Who could fail to see that Bolshevik promises had less value than the paper they were written on? Open anti-British propaganda would be no more objectionable than a subtle campaign to influence Oriental minds against England by the ostentatious renunciation of Tsarist claims and privileges, intended to point a contrast between Soviet generosity and British greed.



#### § 4. *The Genoa and Lausanne Conferences*

In spite of all the evidence of Soviet aid to the Turks fighting against his Greek friends, Lloyd George persisted in his advances to Moscow. Curzon, who during the life of the Coalition government was permitted to play only a subordinate part in the direction of British foreign policy, had to acquiesce. There were, indeed, convincing arguments, from a British and also a European standpoint, for trying to be on good rather than bad terms with Soviet Russia. Seen in its proper proportion, Russian flirtation with Moslem national movements was an irritation and not a danger to British interests. It could be foreseen that the countries of the Middle East, once their independence had become secure, would be just as inimical to Soviet imperialism as to British. For the time being, they were inclined to Russia because she seemed the less powerful of the two great Powers. But, just as the Balkan nations that imperial Russia made it her object to carve out of the Ottoman Empire had constituted a barrier to Russian expansion southwards, so these Moslem nations would inevitably become obstacles sooner or later to Soviet pressure towards the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf and the frontiers of India. More serious obstacles than the petty client states that Curzon and others dreamed of setting up in order to guarantee British supremacy in these quarters.

Again, with the treaty of peace between Poland and Russia and the New Economic Policy, the revolutionary menace in Europe, if by no means extinct, had obviously begun to decline. Was Communist propaganda really a thing to be frightened of? Only among men reduced by war, hunger, or misgovernment to a state of desperation. In Britain, at any rate, Communist converts were a tiny minority unworthy of serious attention. Besides, hostile relations with Moscow would not prevent the infiltration of Russian ideas into the British Isles. The opposite, perhaps, was nearer the truth. The more the Bolsheviks felt themselves menaced by foreign countries, the more efforts they would make to embarrass their enemies by spreading subversive doctrines abroad. And, in a democracy at least, ideas could not be stopped by frontiers. However little contact there might be between Soviet Russia and the rest of the world, the mere existence of Communist rule was enough to provoke unrest in proletarian minds. The less known, however, about actual conditions in the workers' paradise, the greater its appeal; and for the government to show fear of Bolshevism might be the best way to persuade people that Russian teaching would benefit them.

There were positive in addition to negative arguments for cultivating amicable relations with Moscow. Whether for good or ill the revolutionary government had come to stay. And it seemed about to abandon its economic and social heresies and return to orthodox and rational tenets. Lenin and his colleagues were beginning to learn from painful

experience that a stable society could only be built upon the institution of private property, and that their fantasies could not be put into practice. Undoubtedly the era of Russian Jacobinism was nearing its end, that of reaction from revolutionary excesses approaching. Sanity would come all the quicker if the world were ready to understand and assist Russia without interfering, to an unnecessary extent, in her internal affairs. It was important for Europe as well as Russia that the latter's convalescence should not be protracted. For Europe, two years after the Treaty of Versailles, found itself in anything but a satisfactory condition.

Of the three principal Allied Powers, the United States had withdrawn entirely from European affairs, and the others, Britain and France, had increasing difficulty in composing, or concealing, their differences. Between the former Allies and Germany complete deadlock existed on the question of reparations. A severe economic depression followed the first months of post-war optimism. At the beginning of 1921 there were a million unemployed in Britain; by the end of the same year the number had almost doubled. It occurred to Lloyd George to link together the insoluble problems of German reparations and French security with European reconstruction through concerted economic action. An essential factor in the rehabilitation of Europe was Russian recovery. Europe could not settle down politically or economically without Russia. And that enormous and stricken country provided a field that bankers and industrialists on both sides of the Rhine might co-operate in tilling, to Europe's advantage and at the same time to Russia's. Accordingly, on British initiative, an international conference was called to meet at Genoa and Russian representatives were invited to attend it. The conference would be asked to consider a scheme for a European consortium, with German participation, to finance and operate economic undertakings in Soviet Russia.

It was an impossible scheme. Although very anxious to attract foreign capital and enterprise by offering to grant concessions to individual capitalists, the Communists could never agree to a plan holding such dangerous potentialities for them. Having fought and defeated the imperialists and their White puppets, they would be mad to allow themselves to be choked into submission on the pretext of reconstructing European economy. What they feared above everything was a combined front of the capitalist Powers. Hostility between ex-Allies and Germans reassured them. It was folly to suppose that any scheme tending to unite Europe would be regarded at Moscow without deep distrust. The proposed European consortium had the most drastic implications of interference in and control over Russian economic life. Foreign pre-Revolution debts were to be recognized, nationalized properties to be returned to their owners, the currency regulated by the precepts of capitalist finance, a system of capitulations introduced which would put Russia on the level of China. A European receivership, in brief, was to be established in the bankrupt country.

These ideas betrayed a fundamental misunderstanding of Communist mentality and of the intention of the New Economic Policy.

Soviet Russia was, indeed, economically near the last gasp. Years of war and anarchy, succeeded by a great famine, had compelled a measure of retreat from the sanguine expectations of early revolutionary days. It was only a temporary, strategic retreat. The peasants were allowed to sell their produce freely. Retail trade and small-scale business were restored to private operation. Capitalists and technicians were invited from abroad to assist in exploiting the national resources. But the "commanding heights" of economic power were retained in Communist hands. Basic industries, currency, transport, foreign trade remained securely under their control. Otherwise, the dictatorship of the proletariat would have abdicated and the fruits of the Revolution would have been irretrievably thrown away. Soviet Russia would have become an imperialist colony.

The Genoa Conference failed before it started. Europe had not yet become ripe for co-operation. What hope existed of achieving any useful result disappeared when Poincaré came into office in France, determined to have done with the futile meanderings of Anglo-French diplomacy and adopt a positive and, if necessary, unilateral policy towards the recalcitrant Germans. He detested Lloyd George and had not the smallest faith in the misty and ambitious programme of Genoa, as he made plain by refusing to be present at the Conference himself. In Moscow it seemed that there was not much to be gained there, but still less to be lost. The prestige and influence of Soviet Russia might be raised by the appearance for the first time at an international assembly of delegates from a Communist government, and Genoa might serve as a good platform from which to address the unregenerate world. And then the opportunity might be used to make profitable contacts and negotiate separate agreements with some of the countries represented. Discussions were already proceeding between Moscow and Berlin for a mutual abandonment of claims and debts and the establishment of normal relations.

It was natural that the two pariahs of Europe should tend to come together, in spite of the malodorous memory of Brest-Litovsk and antagonistic principles of government. Fear that they might do so had always been one of Lloyd George's motives in seeking the friendship of Soviet Russia, while other people, afraid of the same event, drew the opposite conclusion and believed it to be a reason for ostracizing the Bolsheviks. Thus the only concrete outcome of the Genoa Conference was a Russo-Germany treaty of amity, the Treaty of Rapallo, which, though scarcely surprising, came as a shock to the Western Powers, since it showed an unwholesome spirit of defiance on the part both of Russians and Germans. The bond of Rapallo continued in existence during the lifetime of the German Republic, and even in some degree after its decease. We may see in this treaty the ancestor of the pact of August, 1939, between Stalin and Hitler, which led immediately to the second World War.

Meanwhile the Greco-Turkish War still lingered on in the cruel uplands of Anatolia. The Greek army, at first superior to Kemal's forces, was growing weaker all the time relatively to its opponents, fortified

by assistance not merely from Russia but also from France and Italy. Even their British supporters deserted the wretched Greeks, who were by now ready to agree to anything in order to extricate themselves from a hopeless situation. But Kemal would not be cheated of his victory. At last the moment came to strike, the invader fled, and in a fortnight from the opening of the offensive the whole Greek army was driven into the sea. There followed an acute crisis between Turkey and the Western Powers; for the Turks at once marched towards the Straits with the object of carrying the war into Europe. But the Straits had been declared a neutral zone by the Powers and were occupied by British, French and Italian troops. The danger was surmounted, thanks to restraint on Kemal's part and a firm stand on the British, and arrangements were made for a conference to be held at Lausanne, so that a new Turkish peace treaty might be substituted for the Treaty of Sévres. To this conference Soviet representatives had grudgingly to be admitted, since Russia's right as a Black Sea Power to have a say about the future of the Straits could not be denied.

The question of the Straits, so often in the preceding century a matter of controversy between Britain and Russia, now presented itself in a completely novel shape. No longer was Russia endeavouring to crush and Britain to preserve a decrepit Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire, both in Europe and Asia, had fallen, and nobody thought for a moment of restoring it. From the ruins a militant, nationalist Turkey had sprung, torn up the ignominious treaty by which the victors attempted to rob and shackle her, and secured recognition of her claim to confer with them on equal terms. Turkey's best friend was Soviet Russia, who by an act of unparalleled abnegation had renounced all those advantages that the Tsar had been promised as spoils of war, and even surrendered territory in eastern Asia Minor won by Alexander II fifty years before. The principal foe of resurgent Turkey was Britain, the country that for generations had schemed and fought to preserve the integrity of the Turkish Empire. Now that empire lay in pieces and the lion's share went to the former champion of the Turks. While Russia stood as far from Constantinople as in the reign of Catherine the Great, Britain had laid her hands successively on Cyprus, Egypt, Palestine and Iraq, not to mention minor acquisitions.

Was it quite certain, however, that the old relationship of Russia, Britain and Turkey would never recur? The Turks were thankful for Soviet favours. But Russia by helping them had been helping herself. There seemed no occasion for excessive gratitude. One day Russia might again be a menace and British aid necessary. Moreover, England was at present too strong and Russia too weak to rely over much on the assistance of the one or the forbearance of the other. The very warmth of Russian friendliness appeared suspicious. On this question of the Straits, for instance, Moscow was more Turkish than the Turks, urging them insistently to claim the right of unrestricted control in peace and war. Were Communist motives so disinterested, so totally different from those of Tsarism?

The Russian attitude to the Straits always had been, and continued to be, determined mainly by the facts of geography. In the first place, it was defensive, in that Russians wanted to secure their Black Sea coast from attack, and therefore to close the Straits against hostile navies. Secondly, while keeping others out, they wished to obtain free egress to the Mediterranean for their own Black Sea fleet. Lastly, they were anxious to prevent any interruption of trade, as had periodically occurred in the past through Turkish disorders, between their Black Sea ports and the oceans. The second was the least important of these considerations, especially at a time when they possessed practically no Black Sea fleet. At Lausanne Russia concerned herself only with the first and third. They constituted good reasons for encouraging Turkish objection to the proposed opening and internationalization of the Straits. Besides the adverse effect on Turkey's position, British and French fleets would be given access to the Black Sea, to carry munitions of war to another Denikin or Wrangel or to make a second invasion of the Crimea. From the Russian point of view, and in this Whites agreed with Reds, international control of the Straits meant control by the leading naval Powers of the Mediterranean. It would be more damaging to the interests of their country than foreign mastery of the Suez Canal to British interests, or of the Panama to American. If Russia herself could not own the Straits, it was essential that a Turkey bound to her by fear or friendship, or by both, should be the gatekeeper.

The British, and also the French and Italians, would not relinquish their demand that the Straits be demilitarized and opened to their warships, but they were prepared to concede that, apart from these restrictions, they should remain in Turkish hands. And Turkey, to the disappointment of Chicherin, the Soviet Foreign Commissar, was strangely irresolute. It became evident that Kemal, intending to make Ankara his capital, was not so sensitive about the defence of Constantinople as the Ottoman Sultans had been. The question of the Straits had ceased, whether permanently or not, to be one of paramount importance to the Turks and they were not willing to be intransigent just to please Moscow.

Thus the Russians found themselves in this matter, which alone they were allowed to discuss, disagreeably isolated. Curzon could exact payment from Chicherin for Persia and all the other misdeeds of Bolshevism at British expense down to Rapallo. He used his opportunity with skill and gusto; and was able to pride himself on having gained everything Britain wanted of Turkey and at the same time disturbed, if not shattered, the unholy intimacy between Ankara and Moscow. Regarded as a triumph over Soviet Russia, the Straits Convention drawn up by the Lausanne Conference might be impressive. It was not so impressive as a solution of the question of the Straits. Thirteen years later it would be scrapped with British consent and another arrangement made, far more favourable to Russia than anything she asked for at Lausanne. If Curzon's Convention had remained in force until the second World War, it would have been possible for the Italian navy to

penetrate into the Black Sea in support of Hitler's invading armies, to the great injury of Russia and also of Britain.

On his return from Lausanne, the crisis arising from France's occupation of the Ruhr absorbed Curzon's attention and Muscovite iniquities had to be relegated to the background. But he found time to follow up his blow at Chicherin with another calculated to confirm British ascendancy. The fall of the Coalition government had freed him from Lloyd Georgian fetters, and Downing Street was no longer a resort of pro-Bolshevist fancies. Friction over Turkey spread, as it had done in Tsarist days, further east and led to complaints on the British side of Russian intrigue in Persia and Afghanistan. These formed the main burden of a tremendous indictment that the British Foreign Secretary drew up against the Soviet government, accompanied by a threat to abrogate the Anglo-Russian commercial agreement in default of full satisfaction within ten days. Perhaps he hoped that the Soviet reply would afford a pretext for getting rid of Lloyd George's obnoxious treaty, which had always galled him. The Russians, however, took the ultimatum meekly and gave way in almost every particular. The existing ambiguous relations between the two countries continued until the Conservatives fell. For, owing to the failure of the Genoa Conference, the normal state of affairs contemplated by the commercial treaty had never been established.

The advent of the first Labour government, which coincided with a striking change for the better in the general atmosphere of Europe, brought new and fertile possibilities of Anglo-Russian concord. No sooner had Ramsay MacDonald settled himself in the chair vacated by Lord Curzon than he dispatched a telegram to Moscow announcing *de jure* recognition of the Soviet government by Great Britain. It was not too soon, although other states were even tardier. More than six years had elapsed since that November day in Petrograd when Lenin and his followers brushed Kerensky aside and proclaimed themselves the lawful rulers of Russia.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ISOLATION OF RUSSIA (1924—1934)

#### § 1. *The Comintern, the Red Letter and Locarno*

THE Russian, like the French, Revolution had a dual aspect, national and universal. Hence the magnitude and extent of its consequences. On the one hand, it radically altered the character of Russia's political and economic system. On the other hand, it profoundly modified the map of Europe, the international balance of power and, most important of all, the ideas of mankind about the structure and aims of society. This dual nature of the Revolution made it difficult for other governments to deal with Soviet Russia. They could never be sure whether

they were talking to representatives of a national state or to agents of world revolution. The Communists would, indeed, have been shocked at the suggestion that national interest dictated their actions. They were fervent internationalists, or rather cosmopolitans, whose dream was to overthrow capitalism everywhere on earth. They believed, when they seized power in Russia, that they were taking the first step towards a universal proletarian revolution and that a socialist Russia could not survive in a capitalist world. But, as the expected revolutions abroad missed fire, their attitude changed. It seemed better to preserve one small spot of light in the darkness than to run the risk of the sacred flame being altogether extinguished. Inevitably, their faith in universal revolution started to decline. Communism was a reality in Russia ; outside it was an aspiration, a dwindling aspiration. And once the Communists came to the conclusion that their first duty was to their own revolution, it became increasingly hard for them to keep its interests distinct from those of the Soviet state. The Russian Communist Party both ruled the state and embodied the revolution. Nevertheless, they would not, and could not, disavow their ultimate purpose of converting the rest of the world to Communism. To do so would be to betray an essential part of their creed, which was unthinkable. Moreover, Soviet Russia was surrounded by capitalist enemies, and they were still persuaded that in the long run revolutionary principles must spread or die. To refrain from helping to spread them would surely be suicidal.

Thus an inherent contradiction existed in Soviet foreign policy. Chicherin spoke with one voice ; Zinoviev, the president of the Communist International, spoke with another. The former deliberated as Soviet Foreign Commissar with the Foreign Ministers of other nations. The latter, as head of an international revolutionary organization, incited the workers of those nations to rise against their rulers. While Chicherin was attempting to settle Russian relations with neighbouring countries and obtain recognition and credits, Zinoviev was doing everything possible to render his efforts unavailing. Conversely, every step that the Soviet government took towards the restoration of normal intercourse with other governments set back the cause of international revolution.

Soviet statesmen, when charged with fomenting disorder abroad, always replied that they had no responsibility for the Comintern. It was an independent association of Communist parties, of which the Russian formed only one among many, and quite separate from the government of Russia. These protestations deceived nobody. The seat of the Comintern was at Moscow. The principal members of its governing body were Russians, native or adopted. It was financed and subjected to a rigid and jealous discipline by the Kremlin. Russian influence decided not only the general policy of individual Communist parties, in Germany, France, Britain and elsewhere, but even day-to-day tactics. Zinoviev was one of the most prominent Bolsheviks ; others, including Lenin himself, shared in the councils of the Comintern. It cannot be denied that for many years after the Revolution there were, at the least, occasions

when Soviet foreign policy depended on the prospects of international Communism and not on ordinary diplomatic considerations. These occasions became fewer and fewer ; but, in face of repeated disappointments, Moscow persisted stubbornly in the belief that the end of capitalism was approaching. Soviet assistance could hasten the desirable event, through the Comintern, without direct Soviet intervention until the fruit had become ripe. What seemed scarcely less important, the Comintern could ensure that, where a revolution did occur, those leading it should be men on whom Moscow might rely.

The Communists yielded gradually, reluctantly and partially to the logic of facts. We may distinguish several stages in the process of disillusionment. 1919 and 1920 were the years of Red hope. But the Comintern was only born in 1919 and had not yet acquired strength or prestige. 1920 saw it at the peak of its power. The second world congress of the Comintern opened in Moscow, amidst great enthusiasm, on the eve of the Russian advance upon Warsaw. "We will test the revolutionary temper of Poland," said Lenin, "with bayonets." Failure in Poland was followed by other failures, notably in Italy and Germany, and the thermometer of revolution showed a perceptible drop the next year. The French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 and the consequent German financial collapse revived Communist hopes again for a while, only to dash them down lower than before. And afterwards, for more than ten years at any rate, the history of the Comintern was one of steady and dismal degeneration.

A curious and typical illustration of the dual policy of Soviet Russia appeared in the attitude of the Comintern and the Moscow government during the Ruhr crisis. At Rapallo Russia and Germany had made a treaty of friendship, and the Soviet government was averse from letting Russia's partner be permanently weakened or dismembered by France. But the fall of the mark led to such suffering and discontent in Germany as to provoke extremist risings both of the Right and the Left. The Comintern engaged itself eagerly on the side of the German Communists in their attempt to overthrow the republican government, at the very time when the Red Army was delivering shells to the Reichswehr to maintain the same government in power.

Certainly the Comintern remained a hindrance, if not an insuperable barrier, in the way of relations of confidence between Soviet Russia and other countries. Did it suffice to explain the intensity of international ill-feeling against the Communist state ? Other reasons existed. There was, from the point of view of the Western Powers, the Russo-German treaty, and also Soviet policy in Asia. There were the questions of repudiated debts and confiscated private property. Still more formidable was, or seemed, the ideological issue. To most people whose opinions counted in the capitalist democracies the Soviet government constituted a bloodstained tyranny, based on principles of self-evident and perverse error. Prophecies that Communism would disappear in a few months' time were repeatedly falsified, but continued to be regularly made. Somehow or other Lenin did not meet the fate of Robespierre ; the



Muscovite Thermidor tarried. The idea that the New Economic Policy involved a definite abandonment of economic heresy and a return to free trade and private enterprise also proved premature. In spite of chaos, famine and misery, the Bolsheviks clung with puzzling tenacity to their absurd theories. So much the worse for the Russian people, who seemed destined to eternal torment. Russia had always, even before the Revolution, been a land of mystery and horror. Now old tales of Tsarist despotism and atrocity were far surpassed by the stories of Bolshevik rapine, murder and irreligion that White fugitives and others sedulously related.

The propertied classes, in this and other countries, perceived only the dark side of the Russian Revolution. They fell into the same mistake as their predecessors, for whom Burke wrote his sterile philippic against the French Revolution. Democracy, hated and feared by men of substance then, like Communism by a later age, had become respectable, and as blindly opposed to any attempt to disturb the existing social order as monarchy and aristocracy had ever been. The working classes, however, saw things in a different and clearer light. They did not believe that political democracy, without economic and social, represented the last word in human wisdom. Even supposing reports of Bolshevik ferocity had some substance in them, Tsarist officials and landlords were only paying the penalty for centuries of neglect and exploitation of Russian workers and peasants. It might be rough justice, but it was justice all the same. As belligerent passion subsided, the sentiment of international labour solidarity revived and awakened a deep sympathy for Soviet Russia. Here was a nation that, crudely perhaps, had done what socialists and trade unionists all over the world merely talked of doing. Capitalists had been expropriated, industry nationalized, privileges of rank and class abolished, the oppression of the poor by the rich ended, the welfare of the masses given precedence over the interests of the few. In Britain, as in other capitalist countries, the Labour movement was not all of one mind about Moscow and its methods. A ceaseless controversy proceeded between a minority advocating and a majority opposing violent revolution on the Russian model. But the suspicion of Moscow did not prevent the majority from taking part against the enemies and detractors of Soviet rule.

The British Labour party came into office resolved to clear away the pile of obstacles that cumbered the road leading from England to Russia, both because of its sympathy with Communist principles and on practical grounds of trade and peace. Recognition having been granted, the next step was to carry through a treaty that would regulate all outstanding differences between the two countries. It was not an easy matter. In particular, the question of Russian pre-revolutionary debts, essential to a satisfactory agreement, seemed full of difficulties. It had already been discussed without result at the Genoa Conference two years previously. The Russians expressed the view that they were under no obligation in respect of liabilities, public or private, incurred before the Revolution. But they were willing to make partial compensation to private creditors

and claimants, as a matter of policy and on condition of receiving reciprocal benefit. If they obtained a British loan, they would devote a portion of it to satisfying British demands. Otherwise they would pay nothing. The question arose, would the City consider a loan to Russia? It would not, without a guarantee from the British government. This MacDonald was anxious to avoid giving, since he knew that it would be fiercely opposed in Parliament and put his minority administration in peril of its existence. Finally, the guarantee was conceded, subject to conditions that might be expected to postpone if not nullify it altogether. The Russian negotiations were unskilfully conducted, and the Liberals, who were discontented with the government from other causes, thought a good opportunity had come to turn it out. They seized on the Russian treaty, together with the abandonment of criminal proceedings against a Communist editor, Campbell, on a charge of incitement to mutiny, to combine with the Conservatives against Labour. MacDonald was defeated in Parliament and a general election ensued, in which the central issues consisted of the treaty with Moscow and the Campbell case.

Nothing is more fatal for a political party than to become identified with the interests of a foreign country, especially one evoking such passionate feelings as Soviet Russia. Labour had allowed itself to be manœuvred into a hopeless position. The finishing touch was given to its discomfiture by the timely publication, five days before the poll, of what purported to be a letter written by Zinoviev to the British Communist Party, containing exhortations and instructions of a subversive character. The "Red Letter" did the same kind of service to the Conservatives as the Reichstag Fire would later do the Nazis, and also the same kind of disservice to relations with Soviet Russia. A Conservative government came into power with a large majority eager to bait the Bolsheviks and their friends in Britain. MacDonald's treaty was rejected. British hostility to Russia hardened into a form as obdurate as it had ever assumed in the nineteenth century. Conservative ministers appeared even to go out of their way to be rude. The Chancellor of the Exchequer thought nothing of referring to the Soviet government as "a band of cosmopolitan conspirators gathered from the underworlds of the great cities of Europe and America." "A junta of assassins and plunderers" was an ordinary specimen of the language used in public by another member of the Cabinet. Soviet leaders, we may admit, were no more restrained in their choice of epithets to apply to British statesmen.

The uncompromising attitude of the Baldwin government did not result solely from party spirit and class prejudice. There were reasons both of internal and external policy. When the Conservatives kept on damning Moscow and its sinister intrigues, they had their eyes fixed on people nearer home. It was an effective method of discrediting British dupes of Bolshevism, who, unfortunately, were numerous. The direct influence of the Comintern in Britain might be less strong than in some Continental countries, but certain sections of the working class, the miners, for example, were too much disposed to listen to propaganda after the Muscovite pattern, if not of Muscovite origin, for the peace of

mind either of employers or of the government. Generally speaking, the British trade unions showed themselves more open to extreme ideas about the time of the first Labour government than before or since. It was a tendency that culminated in the General Strike of 1926, an occurrence suspected of owing a good deal to Russian inspiration.

Reasons of external policy also brought the British government into collision with Soviet Russia. Though less obtrusive, they were perhaps as weighty as those of a domestic order. In spite of the efforts of Curzon, a close friendship persisted between Moscow and Ankara. So long as Turkey refused to be reconciled to the loss of Mosul to Iraq it would endure. Persia and Afghanistan, too, continued to look to Russia for support. And, as in the 'nineties of the last century, Anglo-Russian rivalry moved from the Near and Middle to the Far East and the situation in China began to cause concern in London.

Unlike Curzon, however, the new British Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain, concentrated his gaze on Europe and the Franco-German problem. The foundations of an understanding had been laid, under MacDonald, by the introduction of the Dawes Plan, affording a provisional solution of the question of German reparations. It was Chamberlain's object to take advantage of this and other favourable circumstances to bring Germany back into what had once been called the Concert of Europe and at the same time satisfy the French demand for security. Germany should be admitted to the League of Nations, and Britain and Italy should join in giving both France and Germany a guarantee against aggression. Thus victors and vanquished of the World War would be reconciled and a new era of disarmament and peaceful co-operation might begin, based on an equipoise of forces on either side of the Rhine. This scheme, successfully brought to completion by the treaties of Locarno, had attractions for Germany and the ex-Allied Powers alike. But what about the other, the fifth, great European Power? The continual fear of the Russians, thus left out in the cold, was that the capitalist Powers, from hatred of Communism, would combine to attack their country, a fear none the less real for being illusory. Agreement between Germans and French did not occasion rejoicing in Moscow, and German entry into the League of Nations, an organization then regarded by the Soviet government with disapproval and distrust, appeared an eventuality to be prevented by all possible means. It would ruin the Rapallo policy, so dear to Chicherin, and entail the complete isolation of Russia. The strongest diplomatic pressure was therefore exerted on Berlin; and not without effect, since the Germans had difficulty in making up their minds whether the benefit to them of reconciliation with France outweighed the disadvantage. While Moscow tried to draw Germany one way, London tugged her the other. London pulled the harder.

Locarno was above all a British achievement. The French were half-hearted about it and the Germans doubtful. Its real author, so far as any individual is entitled to claim the credit, may be considered Lord D'Abernon, the British ambassador in Berlin, rather than Chamberlain.

D'Abernon, not a professional diplomatist but a banker, was a distinguished man whom both his own and the German governments listened to with respect on account of his financial knowledge and personal authority. He had become convinced that the peace of Europe and the interests of Britain demanded Germany's rehabilitation; and also that the Franco-German question must be solved, in order that attention might be given to the "vastly more important problem of the defence of Europe against Asiatic Communism." All nations who regarded Western civilization as a precious heritage ought to stand together against the Bolshevik menace; Britain in the forefront, because, in addition to her concern in European tranquillity, the old Anglo-Russian enmity in Asia was coming to life in a new and deadly guise. No more urgent necessity confronted British statesmen than to keep Germany from throwing herself into Russian arms. On this view, and it was that which prevailed in London, good relations with the Soviet Union were neither to be expected nor desired. How could Germany be persuaded that her duty lay in helping to defend Europe against the Red Peril, if Britain did not show herself staunch?

§ 2. *The Consequences of Locarno—Trouble in China—The Arcos affair*

Publishing, four years after Locarno, a diary kept by him while in Berlin, D'Abernon could look back with satisfaction on his share in European pacification and contemplate the future with sober confidence. Chamberlain, Briand and Stresemann had carried on their beneficent work in harmonious partnership; the turmoil of the post-war period had become a fading memory; the Rhine frontier was ceasing to pre-occupy the thoughts of statesmen; Germany was getting used to the Genevan stage and cast only perfunctory glances over her shoulder towards Moscow, whose influence every day diminished in Europe and Asia. There was little on the surface to betray the extravagant optimism of these ideas, which were shared by most other people, very soon to be wiser and sadder. Without doubt, the principal reason for Germany's repudiation of the policy begun by Stresemann is to be found in the great economic depression, bringing with it mass unemployment and unrest, that started late in 1929 in America and burst on Europe with full force eighteen months later. But why should German discontent have taken the direction it did, a violent shift to the extreme Right? Only because the ground had been carefully prepared beforehand by the forces of reaction. D'Abernon and British opinion in general, partly under his influence, took far too favourable a view of the stability of the German Republic and the peaceful inclinations of the German people.

It would not be fair to criticize Locarno because excessive hopes were placed in it. It effected a real, even if only temporary, improvement in the European situation. Nevertheless, it contained a fundamental fallacy—namely, that the greatest menace to the peace of Europe lay on the western frontier of Germany, instead of, as was really the case, on the eastern. The Baldwin government considered that the obligations

of Locarno entailed a heavy sacrifice of British freedom of action in the interests of European peace. Further undertakings in Europe were neither necessary nor possible. The Rhine was the limit. "No British government," wrote Chamberlain to our ambassador in Paris during the negotiations that preceded Locarno, "ever will or ever can risk the bones of a British grenadier" for the Polish Corridor. Yet the issue of the Polish Corridor was precisely that on which his brother took the country to war with Germany in 1939. It is at least arguable that if Neville Chamberlain's belated guarantee to Poland had been given at the time of Locarno, or at any date up to ten years afterwards, there would have been no German attack on that country and the second World War would have been averted. On the other hand, it may be said that a sound case existed for restricting British commitments on the Continent to an extent which it could be foreseen with reasonable certainty that British governments would be willing and able to make effective. A mere paper guarantee would be useless. But, if so, it was imperative that a satisfactory arrangement should be devised for preserving peace in eastern Europe. The entry of Germany into the League of Nations did something, but not enough. Eastern Europe could not settle down permanently while the strongest Power in that region still remained outside the League and hostile to it. Unless a Locarno of the East, involving Russia's entry also into the League, supplemented the Locarno of the West, the latter must inevitably founder sooner or later. Europe was too small for one half to be secure and the other half insecure.

Although the Rapallo relations between Soviet Russia and Germany were not entirely destroyed by Locarno and, indeed, the treaty was reaffirmed shortly afterwards, they were naturally weakened by Stresemann's policy of reconciliation with the Western Powers. Germany, in any case, continued to be impotent, and her not exactly cordial friendship compensated inadequately for the inveterate hostility of France and England. The political and financial attraction exerted by the Western Powers had proved more powerful than Russian influence; and there could be no mistaking the disappointment and alarm of Moscow. Now, with the possible exception of Turkey, only one pariah remained in Europe. It may be true that Russia's isolation was largely self-imposed and that the Soviet government would not then have been disposed to join the League, even if it had been invited. To Communist minds the League Covenant seemed a piece of organized hypocrisy thinly veiling the imperialist greed of the Powers. The conviction gained support from the fact that, at the very time when the pious provisions of the Covenant were being drafted at the Paris Peace Conference, Allied statesmen were doing their best to devastate and enslave Russia by giving assistance to the White reactionaries. Internal conditions in the Soviet Union, where Stalin had not yet finally defeated Trotsky, and fantasies about world revolution were still far from being dissipated, would have made it difficult for Moscow to follow Germany to Geneva. And yet, as subsequent history demonstrated, Communists were very ready, if the practical advantage seemed clear, to fling doctrinal objections

overboard. At least, if tolerable relations with the Western Powers could have been established, a gradual approach to the League might have been possible. But, instead, relations with them showed no improvement, or even deteriorated, especially with Britain. And Britain, among the chief Powers, remained the one that beyond any other could determine the attitude of the outside world to the Soviet Union.

The British General Strike was another failure for the Comintern. It also caused the British Left to cool visibly towards Soviet Russia, while it aggravated the russophobia of the Right. Events in Asia, where the Bolshevik threat, beaten off in Europe and at home, became all the more active, were calculated still further to inflame Anglo-Russian hostility. Britain's alliance with Japan had been abandoned after the war for the sake of Anglo-American harmony. But the British and Japanese, who had interests in China exceeding those of other capitalist nations, still shared a common fear of Russian designs. For its part, Moscow, having experienced a Japanese invasion of Siberia and being at perpetual odds with Britain, was eager to extend its influence among the Chinese, especially since they seemed the most receptive of Asiatic peoples to Marxist teaching. At worst, the imperialist Powers would be hampered in any attempt to interfere with Russian possessions in the Far East. At best, it was possible to visualize a Soviet China allied with, or even united to, Soviet Russia.

When, therefore, Sun Yat-Sen, the founder of the Chinese nationalist party, the Kuomintang, asked for Russian aid and advice in restoring Chinese unity and rescuing the country from its domestic and foreign oppressors, he received a favourable response. Before long, Soviet advisers obtained a prominent place in the councils of the Kuomintang. One of them in particular, Borodin, became for a time rather the director than the adviser of the party. Chinese Communists, too, occupied key positions in it and in the nationalist army. The strongholds of Chinese nationalism were Canton and Shanghai, and, since these great cities were also strongholds of British commercial power, the campaign to regenerate China and shake off the unequal treaties naturally took an anti-British form. It was a development that Russians, considering the state of Anglo-Russian relations, were bound to welcome, even though it might be only to a minor extent of their making. Soon after the General Strike in Britain, the Kuomintang, a composite collection of elements held together only by nationalist sentiment, was in its most ebullient phase, and the Yangtse valley became the storm centre. Kuomintang forces seized the British Concession at Hankow and threatened the International Settlement at Shanghai, the heart of foreign capitalism in China.

Already serious damage had been done to Britain by boycotts of British goods and strikes organized by the Kuomintang. But now it became a question of defending British lives and property and upholding British prestige in Asia generally, which would be dangerously affected if Chinese nationalism were permitted to work its will unchecked. A large body of troops was accordingly dispatched to Shanghai and, at

the same time, Chamberlain announced a conciliatory policy towards Chinese demands, with the object of winning over the moderate section of the Kuomintang. These steps were prudent and successful, and the peril receded. An open split occurred in the Kuomintang between the Right, led by General Chiang Kai-Shek, and the Left, the latter was worsted and Chinese Communism violently suppressed.

An American once asked Sun Yat-Sen the real name of the mysterious Borodin. "His real name," replied the father of modern China, "is Lafayette." Sun Yat-Sen did not live to see the Russian Lafayette a fugitive from the land that owed him so much and a complete breach between Moscow and the Kuomintang. Although circumstances had enabled Communism to take firmer root in China than elsewhere in Asia, the alliance between it and Chinese nationalism was bound to last only so long as each movement could make use of the other; and there could be no real doubt how a conflict between the two would end. Chiang Kai-Shek, like Kemal, was very willing to accept Russian help, but he had just as little use for Communism as the Turkish leader. High hopes, however, had been raised in Moscow by Chinese events and the egregious fiasco that resulted was a bitter disappointment. From this time the Comintern, as an agent of world revolution, became nothing but the thinnest of phantoms. Yet it remains true that, if China and other Asiatic countries have achieved self-respect, their own efforts might have been insufficient without the practical and moral support lent them by Soviet Russia. And, on the other hand, however ineffective in converting these countries to Communism, the Comintern performed a valuable service for the Soviet state. By assisting the peoples of the East to liberate themselves from their capitalist masters and exploiters, it contributed to the creation of a ring of pro-Russian, or at least anti-imperialist, nations round the Asiatic borders of the U.S.S.R.

No tendency existed in Britain to underrate Soviet aid to the Chinese nationalists. It came merely as the latest instance of the fanatical hatred with which Russians everywhere sought to injure our interests and ruin our commerce in their efforts to weaken the foundations of the British Empire, that stoutest bulwark against Bolshevism. So insisted a powerful section of Conservative opinion, without stopping to think that the wicked Muscovite had, perhaps, been only defending himself. He had received, after all, nothing from the British, or hardly anything, but kicks and insults since the Revolution began. If he found means of delivering some blows in return it was not surprising that he should strike them with alacrity, especially if he could in so doing forward schemes of his own. From the time that the Baldwin government came into office, largely on the strength of opposition to MacDonald's Russian policy, pressure had been exerted on Chamberlain, both inside the Cabinet and out, to break off diplomatic relations with the Soviet government and abrogate the Anglo-Russian trade agreement. This pressure grew after the General Strike, which gave a bad fright to the British middle class. China was the last straw. It now became only a question of choosing a suitable occasion to act. The disappearance from

the War Office of an important secret document provided the pretext needed. Who more likely to have taken it than Communist spies? If the missing document were seized in Russian hands, the true nature of the Soviet government would be exposed to the world. If not, incriminating evidence of some kind would be sure to come to light in the course of an attempt to find it.

One afternoon in May, 1927, a party of police descended on the premises occupied by Arcos, the corporation handling Anglo-Russian commerce, and the Soviet Trade Delegation in London, ransacked the building, searched all the persons found in it, in spite of protests of diplomatic immunity, and proceeded to make a close study of every piece of paper they could lay their hands on. Unfortunately, the document they were looking for was not there. But the Home Secretary, Joynson-Hicks, who had ordered the raid, did not feel discouraged by this proof that the Communists were craftier than he had hoped. Clearly the secret document had been removed immediately before the police arrived on the scene. Was a man well known as a Russian secret service agent not found at work on a photostatic apparatus in a cellar of the building? Moreover, among the papers examined were some which showed employees of the Trade Delegation to be involved in the affairs of the British Communist party. The small mouse that had emerged from the Home Secretary's mountain enabled the Baldwin Cabinet to justify a rupture with the Moscow government. The Delegation was sent packing, while Arcos, since Russian trade seemed too valuable to lose, was allowed to continue its operations. But there resulted a steep decline in Russian commercial exchanges with Britain, which had been increasing to a substantial figure. Against this loss little gain could be set, apart from satisfaction at having trounced the Bolsheviks. Thereafter, until the Baldwin government went out of office two years later, London and Moscow officially ignored each other's existence.

The Arcos incident, combined with the defeat of Chinese Communism, had echoes in other countries, notably France, and caused a general deterioration of Russia's diplomatic position. So much so that an extraordinary war scare spread throughout the Union. Soviet newspapers proclaimed that an attack by the capitalist Powers, led by England, was imminent, and the population fell into a state of panic. It showed, if nothing else, how remote from reality the world in which Communists lived, that they could draw such ludicrous conclusions from the activity of a Joynson-Hicks. In some measure, however, the war scare was probably created from above by the Soviet government for reasons of its own. To stimulate fears of foreign attack is a familiar trick of rulers who find themselves in difficulty at home. This constituted a period of profound crisis in the inner circles of Communism. The New Economic Policy was being brought to an end and preparation made for the first Five-Years Plan. A new phase of the Revolution, we might almost say a new revolution, was about to open. And severe struggles within the party over both internal and external policy pre-



ceded its opening. The failure of the Comintern in China gave rise to fierce recriminations. Trotsky, with his theory of "permanent revolution," was fighting a last battle against Stalin, with his of "socialism in a single country."

The victory of the latter meant that of Soviet, if not Russian, nationalism. The Soviet Union would go its own way, neither trying to force revolutionary ideas on other nations not yet ready to receive them, nor expecting sympathy and assistance from abroad. Practical demonstration alone would persuade the world that capitalist civilization could be surpassed, and not till then would it be converted. The era of propaganda was past. By her unaided efforts backward Russia must transform herself, through the prodigious toil of a few years, into a modern industrial state rivalling fabulous America. Hundreds of new towns, factories and power-stations were to be built, Siberia populated, agriculture mechanized, the incalculable resources of the Union exploited; but all this for the benefit of the masses, not of a few millionaires. It followed that the Soviet state must rely for an indefinite time, like other states, on the protection of its own military forces instead of counting on the uncertain support of the international proletariat. An essential part of the Five-Years Plan was to provide the basis of a heavy armaments industry on Soviet territory, so that the country might be independent of imported arms. With the new phase in Russia there came an alteration in the Russian attitude to other nations, a mood of nearly total indifference. Until the rise of Hitler Communists were absorbed, to the exclusion of everything else, in the tremendous tasks of industrial development and agricultural collectivization that they had set themselves. They demanded nothing of the outside world but that it should leave them in peace, a thing which, for the time being, it seemed disposed to do. True, the Comintern still maintained a pale and pointless existence and provided capitalist states with an excuse for keeping up their boycott of the Bolsheviks. That very fact proved how little Moscow cared about foreign disapproval.

### § 3. *The World Economic Crisis and Soviet Russia's Entry into the League of Nations*

A warmer breeze from the West began to blow with the return to office in Britain of Ramsay MacDonald, at the head of the second Labour government. But it hardly rippled the surface, so thorough was the estrangement between Soviet Russia and her neighbours. To restore mutual confidence would be the work of many years. Communists did not feel themselves much, if any, nearer to MacDonald and Henderson than to their predecessors, Baldwin and Chamberlain. On their side, the leaders of British Labour, having had bitter experience of letting themselves become identified with Bolshevism, were extremely cautious. Nor were they subjected to such pressure by the left wing as formerly; pro-Soviet enthusiasm was considerably less vociferous than it had been. In accordance with its election pledges, the new British government

took steps to restore diplomatic relations with the Soviet government, a fresh commercial treaty was made and, for the first time since the Russian Revolution, ambassadors were exchanged between London and Moscow. But Henderson insisted upon the insertion in the treaty of a stringent provision against Communist propaganda and made it clear that there could be no question of a loan guaranteed by the British government. The same difficulty, therefore, as previously stood in the way of any great development of Anglo-Russian trade. The Russians would not acknowledge pre-revolutionary debts or claims, or agree to any compromise, without long-term credits in return. The City would not abate its hostility to the Soviet Union while Russians refused to modify their principles and conform to economic orthodoxy. Scepticism was an obstacle as well as dislike. Capitalists simply could not bring themselves to believe in the stability of a system so utterly alien and illogical.

It was, however, the capitalist system whose stability proved to be the more insecure of the two. At first there seemed nothing very alarming in the economic crisis, since the capitalist world had always known periodical booms and slumps. But this turned out to be a slump of such unparalleled intensity and duration as to differ not merely in degree but in kind from any experienced before. And it had political consequences whose reactions forced the economic barometer still lower. Russia did not escape the tornado altogether, in spite of her closed economy. For, although the prices of those manufactured goods which she desired to import dropped, an even severer decline took place in the prices of the primary products which she was accustomed to sell in world markets; thus more Soviet exports were required to obtain the same quantity of imports. It caused particular inconvenience in that the slump coincided with the first Five-Years Plan, when domestic stresses were graver than at any time since the conclusion of the Civil War.

Whereas the impact of the depression on Russia was indirect, it came to other countries as a disaster and a psychological shock almost as shattering as war, in some ways worse because harder to understand. Could the whole basis of their economic system be rotten? How had statesmen and economists so deceived themselves and ordinary people? What satisfactory explanation could be given of those millions of unemployed, those farmers ruined by too-bountiful crops, those urban populations hungry in the midst of plenty? It looked as if the Russians, with their odd ideas and their Five-Years Plan, were saner than had been supposed. Perhaps, after all, private enterprise was not an infallible instrument of prosperity and progress.

The capitalist world never recovered from the shock. Since 1931 all nations have in varying degrees abandoned their faith in private enterprise and moved towards a regulated and planned economy, if not on the Russian model at least owing more than they have admitted to Russia's example. This development, together with the impressive practical results achieved by the Five-Years Plans, cured non-Communists of their scepticism about the future of Soviet institutions, even while the gulf between the two worlds remained almost as impassable as ever.

The immediate effects, however, of the economic crisis were unfavourable to Soviet relations with other states. Russia's urgent need of foreign exchange to pay for imports necessary to the success of the Five-Years Plan, and the universal desire of governments to restrict purchases from abroad in order to safeguard national currencies, called forth loud complaints of Soviet dumping. The Communist government's monopoly of foreign trade had always been unpopular, and the fact that other countries were driven to resort to similar expedients did not make matters any better. Again, distaste abroad for the ruthless domestic measures taken by the Soviet authorities at this time, especially against the "kulaks," and, on the Russian side, the contemptuous indifference to foreign opinion, not to say xenophobia, that prevailed, offset a tendency on the part of Moscow to co-operate coyly with the League of Nations on certain questions like that of disarmament. For the first dozen years or so of their rule the Communists had been hated and despised. They were now beginning to be regarded with tolerance, even to inspire some respect; but a respect very far removed from friendship or trust.

The great depression presented at first sight an excellent opportunity to the Comintern to retrieve its fallen credit. Misery and unemployment were bound to cause a trend away from moderate towards extreme politics. The opportunity was completely neglected. Although extremism gained, it was of the Right and not the Left. Circumstances, indeed, were adverse to any organization of international scope and aims; but the Comintern helped by tactics of such crowning ineptitude that they might seem deliberately designed to fail. Thus in Germany, where thirst for revenge upon the authors of the Treaty of Versailles combined with discontent arising from the economic crisis to produce a wave of violent nationalism, the Communist party went so far as to join with the Nazis in attacking the feeble Republic and so put a knife to cut its own throat into the hands of its enemy. The same kind of swing to the Right, in a milder form, happened elsewhere. In Britain the second Labour government, with its comparatively tender feelings towards Soviet Russia, disappeared as ingloriously as the first, and was succeeded by a National, predominantly Conservative, government, animated by anti-Soviet prejudices only a little less rabid than those of the Baldwin government.

The National government, determined to cut down foreign imports in the interests both of home and Empire manufacturers and producers, would be unlikely to worry more about a loss of Russian trade than trade with any other country. After the Arcos raid British exports to Russia had declined sharply, while imports from the U.S.S.R. had continued at a fairly high level. With the advent of the second Labour government the curve of exports and imports rose again, steeply in the case of imports, less so in that of exports. Thus in 1931, the year in which Britain abandoned the gold standard and Free Trade and elected the National government, the total of British exports, including re-exports, to the Soviet Union was under £10 million in value, whereas Russian imports into this country were worth more than £30 million. The large disparity of trade in Russia's favour became a subject

of critical comment in England and, though reduced the next year, it remained considerable. This may have been a factor not without bearing on an awkward Anglo-Soviet incident that followed.

The most important of the not very many British firms engaged in supplying equipment and technical assistance to the Russian government for the Five-Years Plan was the Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company. It was the only one to have its own offices in Russia, and its engineers worked in undertakings all over the Union. Surprise and indignation overtook the British public when it learnt that a number of these men had been arrested by the Soviet authorities and were accused of spying and sabotage. Here was an occasion to excite the passions of all good russophobes. Innocent Englishmen immured in the dungeons of the OGPU; confessions extorted from them by subtle methods of torture; fantastic charges of wrecking their own machinery brought against employees of a firm of the highest reputation; the British ambassador grossly insulted by the Soviet Foreign Commissar; a so-called trial that was a travesty of justice. Drastic action must immediately be taken to show the Bolsheviks that, whatever barbarities they committed against their own people, British subjects could not with impunity be treated in the same way. What more appropriate reply to the outrage than to place an embargo on Russian imports into Britain? They were excessive anyway. In fact, the Soviet government had an undeniably weak case, as the course of the trial made quite evident. The best that could be said was that Russian isolation from the rest of the world and the strain of the Five-Years Plan had produced an abnormal state of mind, prone to see sinister acts and intentions where none existed.

In so far as political motives lay behind the trial of the Metropolitan-Vickers engineers, it was no doubt dictated by internal conditions in the U.S.S.R. and not at all by a desire to provoke British resentment. Blame had been fixed before on foreign technicians for difficulties due really to Russian mismanagement. But the effect on Anglo-Soviet relations would have been unfortunate even if Labour had been in power. The National government was not inclined to resist the clamour of its followers and imposed the embargo. Both Britain and Russia, however, had at this moment strong reasons for not allowing a profitless quarrel to develop out of a matter of minor concern. The engineers were soon released and the British embargo withdrawn.

The world economic crisis seriously upset the plans of the Soviet government. But its secondary results, for Russia as for other countries, were far more disastrous than the purely economic damage it did. As a neighbour of China and Japan in the Far East, the Soviet Union felt intimately affected by the Japanese seizure of Manchuria. Hitherto Russia had been on quite amicable terms with Japan for many years and latterly on bad terms with China. The Manchurian invasion began an entirely new era in Far Eastern history. It became apparent that Japan's aggression was more than a temporary outburst of militarism and signified a radical change in her methods, if not her aims. Sooner or later an armed clash was probable, practically inevitable, between

Japan and Russia, a continuation of the war in which Tsarist Russia had suffered defeat twenty-five years earlier. For the Japanese in Manchuria could not feel safe while Russian territory half-encircled them and endangered their communications with Japan; and Russians naturally feared that they would not stop at Manchuria. Further, Russian ownership of the direct railway line across Manchuria between Vladivostok and the Trans-Siberian, which the Communists still retained, would certainly create friction between them and the Japanese invader. Compared to these issues, the dispute between the Soviet government and the Kuomintang seemed an insignificant affair. Russia started to build up her military strength in the Far East and cautiously to support the Chinese.

Simultaneously events in Europe also took a disturbing turn, even more disturbing since Tokio was distant from Moscow and Berlin near. In the debates between Germany and the ex-Allied Powers Russia, to the extent that she took any part, had stood consistently since Rapallo on the German side, and her relations with republican Germany, though hardly warm, were a great deal closer than with Britain, France or the United States. But now Russians saw the German Republic sinking under the blows of Hitler; and Hitler's movement was not merely fanatically anti-Communist but, much worse, anti-Russian. Did *Mein Kampf* not openly proclaim that Germany must expand eastwards and appropriate Russian territory for herself? When the Nazis finally came to power, the Communists found themselves menaced both in Europe and Asia. And it was no longer an imaginary danger, like that which frightened them for a while after the Arcos raid, but a real, a mortal one, growing more distinct and inescapable every day.

The isolationist policy pursued up to this time by Stalin ceased in these circumstances to be any longer practicable. It had become a matter of absolute necessity to give up all preconceptions that blocked co-operation with other states opposed to Germany and Japan. The fact that these states were those that Communists had learnt to fear and suspect most of all, France and England, amounted to an embarrassment rather than an obstacle. They, too, were ready to revise their policy in the light of recent happenings. The French and British did not feel themselves so much affected as Russians by the Japanese stroke in Manchuria. But when fighting spread to Shanghai their immediate interests were involved. Furthermore, their prestige was bound up with that of the League of Nations and therefore Japan's successful defiance of the League would be deeply injurious to them. Like Russia, France and Britain were still more disquieted by the rise of Hitler than by the Far Eastern situation. The transition from the German Republic to the Third Reich increased the direct threat to French security and the indirect peril to Britain tenfold. It constrained the Western Powers to pocket their anti-Communist prejudices, as Russia her anti-capitalist, and regard the Soviet Union as a potentially useful ally instead of an odious outcast. They did so the more willingly because most of the remaining issues that had divided them from Moscow were dead. By 1933, for example, repudiation of financial obligations had become too

much of a commonplace in capitalist circles for the old question of Tsarist debts to create trouble any longer.

The world of 1933 seemed, indeed, a very different place from that of four years earlier. Anxiety and discouragement were paramount. Only a slight alleviation of the economic depression could be discerned, and clouds loomed in every quarter of the political sky. The dread of another world war was becoming an obsession that in itself made the calamity more probable. On the other hand, danger dispelled a load of illusions. The British began to disabuse themselves of the idea that France had only to get rid of her groundless apprehensions of German revenge in order to remove the chief cause of European uneasiness. The French reaction was sharper. If Hitler's Germany were a reincarnation of William II's, and of this there appeared to be no doubt, could there be any safety for France without Russian assistance, so as to prevent a new attack from the other side of the Rhine, or, if the worst came to the worst, force Germany to fight again on two fronts? Poland and other client states in eastern Europe were not powerful enough. But Soviet manpower was as inexhaustible as that of Tsarist Russia, the industrial resources of the U.S.S.R. had been immensely developed and its military potential was growing fast. Its government, however abhorrent to Frenchmen of the Right, was ruthless, authoritative and more efficient than any government Russia had had for a century. If democratic France could ally herself with a reactionary Tsar, why not with Stalin? In any case, an approach to Soviet Russia might serve to ward off the most terrible of all possibilities, a league between the dictatorships of Berlin and Moscow to enslave Europe. However improbable it seemed at the moment, that eventuality could not be ruled out. The Communist and Nazi systems, for all the mutual loathing they professed, had certain points in common, notably an equal hatred of democracy.

The first step towards the formation of a block of peaceful states to restrain German aggression must be to bring Russia into the League of Nations. In this Britain agreed, though unenthusiastically, with France. By the end of 1933, unlikely as the development had looked at the beginning of the year, it could be foreseen that the entry of the U.S.S.R. into the League was only a matter of time. The fact that Germany and Japan had already left Geneva doubtless made it easier for Communists to join an institution that they had until recently regarded with such derisive distrust. Nine months later Soviet Russia, in the solid shape of Maxim Litvinov, took her seat as a permanent member of the League Council. Russia had at last returned to Europe.

#### CHAPTER VIII

### BRITAIN, RUSSIA AND THE FASCIST MENACE (1934—1941)

#### § 1. *The Rise of the Axis*

THE House of Commons of a former generation had been startled by the appearance of Keir Hardie with his cloth cap, herald of a proletarian invasion of that top-hatted assembly. Similarly, the spectacle of Red

Russia admitted as an equal with Britain and France to the society of states struck people as incongruous and also portentous. What did the Bolsheviks mean by coming into the League? Perhaps their intentions were as honourable as they made out; but, again, perhaps not. Was the real reason not to sow dissension among the Powers and use Geneva as a loud-speaker for their propaganda, in order to prepare the way for their ultimate aim of world upheaval? It might be expected that the feelings of the British public would be mixed, and that Russian accession to the League would seem barely sufficient compensation for German defection. On the whole, however, the recruit was made welcome. A definite improvement in Anglo-Russian relations set in from this date, just as had happened after the Convention of 1907. The government of London, in deciding to invite Soviet Russia to Geneva, and the government of Moscow, in deciding to accept the invitation, were moved by arguments of expediency. It suited them both to reply in this manner to Berlin and Tokio. But the decisions of the two governments necessarily influenced the attitude of the two peoples. Instead of encouragement from above to look on one another as possible enemies, mutual confidence began to be inculcated by their rulers. Common interest tended to dictate, as it invariably does, common understanding. In Russia, indeed, public opinion with regard to foreign countries had little or no independent weight; whereas in Britain popular sentiment about international affairs was a factor distinct from governmental policy and frequently deflecting it.

While there had been small inclination among any part of the British people to have kindly feelings towards imperial Russia, and much to produce repulsion, conditions were now different. The whole of the Left, with more or less intensity and not without reservations, took the Soviet side, and in the 'thirties a fairly large number of politically neutral persons, even of the middle class, felt sympathetic, partly because of the attraction exerted by the colossal Communist experiment, partly from hatred of the militarist and reactionary doctrines and practices of Fascism. In the 'twenties the younger intellectuals had generally been averse from politics, but during the next decade many turned from Freud and Proust to Marx and Lenin and became, if not members of the Communist Party of Great Britain, at least "fellow travellers". Their influence in the realm of ideas was considerable; indeed, British Communism has been mainly an intellectual and educational movement. As a political party in the ordinary sense it has effected nothing whatever, unless in some measure to render Anglo-Soviet relations more difficult.

Currents of opinion on the Continent, as usual, reproduced themselves in a rather fainter form in this country. The Fascist wave, though with diminished impetus, did not fail to reach our shores. Only a few converts were made, but the effect was to stimulate the anti-Russian and anti-League feelings of the extreme Right. British Conservatism, being very strong, could afford to remain firmly and genuinely attached,

apart from a small minority, to democratic principles. Most Conservatives were at once repelled and frightened by the violence of European ideological quarrels, the chief blame for which they assigned to Moscow. Russia, it could be admitted, had apparently ceased to be a centre of revolutionary intrigue. The Soviet government had become internationally respectable to some degree and attained a relative stability in its domestic concerns. But it was a pitiless autocracy, having a great deal in common with the German and Italian dictatorships and nothing at all with the civilized democracies of the West. Such a government could scarcely be relied on to adhere faithfully to the liberal ideals of Geneva. Its object, at best, in entering the League had been to advance its own selfish purposes, which at the moment demanded co-operation with the League Powers. Of course, Hitler was an unpleasant tyrant. But the Nazi system seemed preferable, if a choice had to be made, to the Communist. Life and property, unless one had the misfortune to be a Jew, were secure enough in Germany. Given time, Hitler would calm down and prove less dangerous than he appeared at present. The main thing was to refrain from irritating him, until he did. And to irritate him appeared, whether for sinister reasons or merely from political passion, to be precisely the aim of the Bolsheviks and their British friends, admirers, agents and sycophants.

Sharing these opinions, the British government considered the return of Russia to her place in the councils of Europe a negative rather than a positive advantage, and a doubtful one at that. It could not be opposed in view of the deteriorating international situation and the possibility of Britain's participation in another European war against Germany. Soviet Russia in the League of Nations formed a guarantee against a Russo-German alliance, if nothing else. On the other hand, might it not help to provoke the very disaster towards which Europe was drifting? An Anglo-Franco-Russian coalition would be sure to inflame the fever of German nationalism and, uniting all Germans behind Hitler, might drive them into a desperate effort, as in 1914, to break through the ring of enemies before it closed round them. In any case, so great was the hatred of Hitler for Communism that attempts to bring Germany back into the League would be seriously prejudiced by the presence in it of the Soviet Union. The MacDonald-Baldwin government tried vainly to escape from the toils in which it found itself and gain time in the hope that international agitation would subside. Unfortunately, crisis succeeded crisis, growing continually more complex and acute, so that Continental efforts to encircle Germany could not safely be resisted, however much misgiving they might arouse.

The first open breach by Hitler of the provisions of the detested Treaty of Versailles came with his decree reintroducing military conscription. The result was to stiffen the opposition to Germany of the League Powers, which still included Italy. Russia, since she had not been a signatory of the Versailles Treaty, took no part in the Stresa Conference, where Britain, France and Italy condemned Germany's action. But the conclusion of the Franco-Soviet Pact brought her closer to the Western



Powers. Hitler, however, had small cause for fear. The solidarity of his opponents was a hollow pretence. Soon after Stresa the British government, having slapped Hitler in the face with one hand, proceeded to pat him on the back with the other, by concluding an Anglo-German naval agreement without consulting the remaining Stresa Powers. Meanwhile Mussolini was preparing a momentous stroke, the invasion and conquest of Abyssinia, that proved the value of his strictures on German treaty-breaking. When it became plain what he meant, an explosion of righteous anger in Britain was followed by the greatest crisis in the history of the League of Nations. The League had already sustained a heavy defeat at the hands of Japan. Another successful act of defiance, and it would be irretrievably discredited. This time the facts were even clearer, the scene less distant, the villainy blacker. Pushed forward by the force of British opinion, the National government decided to make trial of the Genevan machinery to stop Italian aggression. Either the attempt would succeed, restoring the prestige of the League and pricking the bubble of the bellicose dictatorships. Or else it would fail, in which case the untimely enthusiasm of the British public for Geneva would be damped, the over-wide commitments of the League Covenant exposed as a snare and pacifist illusions dissipated. By taking the lead in this enterprise Britain might establish a preponderant influence in European affairs and counteract the perilous tendency towards another German war. The Franco-Soviet Pact evoked ominous memories of the old Dual Alliance. Britain must at all costs avoid being dragged again into the whirlpool by France and Russia. Besides, and this, perhaps, seemed as persuasive an argument as any, a general election approached, and a pro-League policy would be popular with the electorate.

The outcome of the experiment at Geneva showed that Mussolini had been right in his conviction that really decisive measures would not be applied against him. Abyssinia was his before the economic sanctions organized by the British did serious harm to Italy, and the League was ruined. Mussolini's triumph did more than ruin the League of Nations. It ended the possibility of co-operation between Italy on the one side and France and Britain on the other, thus clearing the way for the Berlin-Rome Axis. And it gave Hitler the opportunity to take his most daring step so far, the occupation of the demilitarized Rhineland. The step was crucial, for Franco-British failure to reply energetically to this flagrant violation, not only of Versailles, but of Locarno fatally weakened, both materially and morally, the French system of defensive alliances, including the pact with Soviet Russia. Henceforward France shrank into little more than a diplomatic shadow of Britain, renouncing the Continental hegemony she had exercised since the first World War and playing only a secondary and passive part in the events of the next years. The reign of Vichy was already beginning. Together Britain and France started, in their efforts to escape war against the Axis, on the slippery downward path of appeasement, a path that took them further and further away from Soviet Russia.

The Italian conquest of Abyssinia had extensive reactions, in Turkey among other places. That country had moved in recent years nearer to Britain and France, without dissolving its ties with Moscow, and become a member of the League of Nations before Russia. The failure of the League prompted the Turks to ask the Powers to agree to a cancellation of the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne prohibiting their fortification of the Straits. Except for Italy, the signatories of the Lausanne treaty were willing to meet Turkish wishes. Russia, indeed, was as anxious for a revision of the existing Straits Convention as Turkey. An international conference, therefore, took place at Montreux in order to negotiate a new arrangement. The discussions at this conference revealed that Russian entry into the League and the exemplary conduct of the Soviet Union as a member of the League Council had not entirely banished Anglo-Soviet antagonism. They also revealed a striking similarity between the policies of Soviet and Tsarist Russia on the Straits question. Probably at Russian instigation, the Turks proposed, not merely that they should be given liberty of action to fortify the Straits, but that the articles of the Lausanne Convention opening the Straits to warships of all nations should be amended in favour of the Black Sea states; that, in fact, the Russian Black Sea fleet should be allowed free egress to the Mediterranean, while the navies of non-riverain states should be denied entry to the Black Sea. Russia, of course, and France supported the Turkish proposal; Britain alone objected, putting forward the same arguments that Grey had used in his conversations with Isvolsky during the Bosnian crisis nearly thirty years before. Then, as now, Russia and Britain were, if not allies, each linked to France in opposition to Germany. But the fact did not on either occasion suffice to remove an ingrained suspicion of one another's motives on the subject of Turkey. The British attitude may also have been due to a desire not to offend the Fascist dictators by giving way too easily to Russian demands, and in particular to avoid presenting Germany with a pretext for tearing up the Anglo-German naval agreement. Whatever their basis, the objections of Britain were overcome and a compromise was reached that substantially conceded what the Soviet government wanted. The successful result achieved at Montreux even did something in a minor way to improve Anglo-Russian relations. But the next blow that descended upon ill-fated Europe, the Spanish Civil War, had a very much less fortunate effect.

If it had occurred at any other time, the outbreak of a military revolt in Spain against the newly established Popular Front government might not have assumed any international significance. For the last hundred years no country of Europe had been more used to periodical risings by ambitious and discontented generals. Nor did there seem anything about the officer, General Franco, who put himself at the head of this particular revolt to distinguish him from his numerous predecessors. In the summer of 1936, however, Europe was in an abnormal state of tension, ready to flare up in frenzied excitement from the slightest cause. The Fascist dictators were intoxicated by their victories in Abyssinia

and the Rhineland and eager to press home their advantage over the Western Powers. The latter were despondent and confused. A sense of exasperation made itself felt, as people contrasted Fascist arrogance with democratic feebleness and contemplated the humiliating present and the dark future. Opinion in both Britain and France fell into two sections, broadly coinciding but not identical with the division on domestic issues into Right and Left. They drew opposite conclusions from the discomfitures of democracy and the ruin of the League of Nations: the one, that the League, being dead, had better be buried, that attempts to thwart the Fascists would only make them a worse peril; the other, that collective security in some form remained a practicable objective and the aggressive dictatorships must be all the more firmly withstood.

In these circumstances the parties of the Left strove to close their ranks against the threat at home and abroad from the forces of reaction. They were helped by an alteration that had recently come over the Comintern. For the former organ of world revolution, always liable to abrupt changes of tactics in accordance with the fluctuations of Soviet policy, had taken a totally new direction since Stalin decided to join the League of Nations and align Russia with the Western Powers. Instead of attacking every other party of the Left with uncompromising violence, as they had done until the German disaster, Communists were instructed by Moscow to work for a coalition of all elements, middle-class as well as working-class, willing to agree to a progressive and anti-Fascist programme. In this novel guise the Comintern had a remarkable success. First in the Spanish and then in the French general elections of 1936 Popular Front coalitions obtained a majority, and Popular Front governments came into office. Communism, indeed, was only in small part responsible, especially in Spain, for these events; but it reaped a substantial share of the credit, and the consequence was to render very much more sharp the ideological quarrel between Right and Left throughout Europe. Encouraged by the advent of a government, under the socialist Blum, representing their views and interests, the French working class displayed a temper that scared French employers and conservatives out of their wits and produced a critical internal situation in France.

Just then the news of a rebellion of the Right against the Spanish Popular Front, and of Fascist assistance to the rebels, had a disastrous result. The Left called fiercely on Blum to intervene in Spain on behalf of the republican government. With no less heat the French Right took Franco's side and attributed to Communism and its allies all the troubles of France and disorders of Spain. In Britain the commotion was similar but milder, since the internal troubles that beset France were absent and the Conservative party had a secure hold of power. The British government made up its mind at once: strict non-intervention in Spanish affairs was the obvious course, and from this nothing would move it. In spite of the clamour of his supporters, Blum felt constrained to follow the British example.

At first Moscow seems to have been uncertain whether or not to commit itself to any definite action in the Spanish question. The Soviet government might well be cautious, having regard to its lack of experience in international diplomacy and the determination of the French and British to hold themselves aloof. They were unlikely to be pleased by an attempt to force their hands. Russian interests in Spain were insignificant, and if the fate of the Spanish Communists had been the only issue it is not likely that Soviet Russia would have risked burning her fingers on their behalf. On the other hand, the threat to the Spanish government by a semi-Fascist junta aided, if not inspired, by Italy and Germany was a serious matter. Dressed as the Comintern, the Soviet government had been the god-parent of the Popular Front, so that Soviet prestige had become implicated, and a collapse in Spain would have wide and undesirable repercussions. Conversely, if the Spanish Republicans managed to crush Franco, the Popular Front movement, and with it Russian influence, all over Europe would be strengthened; the Fascist Powers would suffer a brilliant defeat; and the demoralization of the anti-Fascist forces would be checked. It was mainly because of the political situation in France that the Spanish question seemed so important. Litvinov knew that the Franco-Soviet treaty was disliked by the French Right, the more since the advent of the Blum government. Should the failure of the Spanish Popular Front be followed, and it might be, by that of the French, there could be little future for the alliance between Russia and France, on which Moscow relied for the defence of the Soviet Union against Fascist aggression. As the only great Power bordering on Spain, France held a better position than any other to intervene in Spanish affairs. By supporting the Republic against the insurgents the French government might ensure their downfall, and by refusing to intervene might decide their success. There had been many occasions in the past when the destiny of Spain depended on the policies of Paris. Unluckily, through timidity, economic perplexities and English pressure, Blum had pronounced for non-intervention. To make him change his mind would be to save him from himself and Spain from Fascism.

The circumstance that Russia and Germany were not contiguous, and therefore that Russia was not liable, at least immediately, to be involved to the same extent as France in case of war with Hitler, had no doubt been one of the factors that convinced Soviet statesmen of the desirability of entering the League and signing a pact of mutual defence with the French. It naturally helped to make them bolder than the French, or British, in suggesting the proper method of dealing with the Fascist menace. Yet who now denies that, however tortuous and clumsy their diplomacy, they were right in their belief that audacity alone could preserve Europe from another general war? Disaster might have been averted at the time of the Italian attack on Abyssinia by sufficiently resolute action. It might again have been averted when Hitler's troops marched into the demilitarized Rhineland zone. Every day the risk grew greater, as the balance of power swung

against the peaceful states. The Spanish crisis presented another, possibly the last, opportunity. Was this to be thrown away too?

The Soviet government decided to go forward and send munitions of war and military advisers to the aid of the Spanish Republicans, while the Comintern used all its new-born energies to stir up feeling, especially in France, against non-intervention. That was not difficult, for an intense wave of sympathy for the Republic and hatred for Franco and his Fascist friends swept over the democracies. It surged round Blum, threatening for a time to carry him away. But in vain. Even at the price of emasculating the French Popular Front and estranging France's ally Russia, not to speak of the danger of a Fascist Spain bound to Italy and Germany, he dared not start on a course that would spur the Fascist Powers to redouble their efforts in support of General Franco, exacerbate internal conflicts in France and alienate the British government. If France had to choose between Britain and Russia, she was bound to prefer the former, on whom she could rely, to the other, who had let her down in 1917 and might very likely do the same again.

Once it became clear that France would not budge, there could be no purpose in continuing Russian assistance to the Spanish government. In a competition between Russia alone and the Fascist Powers, the latter possessed all the advantages. In course of time then, while German and especially Italian men and arms flowed more and more abundantly to the Spanish insurgents, and the Republican cause in consequence, stubbornly defended as it was, steadily declined, Soviet Russia came round gradually and grudgingly to the Anglo-French policy of non-intervention. No doubt she would have liked to wash her hands altogether of a profitless adventure, if that had been politically feasible. Relations between Moscow and Madrid remained sufficiently close to give the Axis a pretext that they were helping Franco only in order to protect themselves and Europe against the Bolshevik menace.

Because of Spain's situation on the flank of the Atlantic and Mediterranean maritime routes, and because of Gibraltar, Spanish independence has always been considered a primary concern of Britain. It was in that strategic light that Franco's revolt against the Republic and the international complications that ensued were regarded in London. The form of government in Spain appeared a matter of indifference, so long as the country did not fall into dependence on a hostile great Power. With one of the great Powers, Italy, Britain had become on particularly bad terms owing to the recent League Sanctions; and the extraordinary interest that Italy showed in General Franco could hardly be due merely to Catholic piety or hatred of Communism. It certainly covered more or less ambitious imperialist schemes in the Mediterranean region. This apprehension, and the desire to re-establish traditional good relations between Britain and Italy on account of the German threat, prompted the British government to insist firmly on the principle of non-intervention in Spain, while caring only moderately, provided the principle were accepted, how far it was honoured by the Axis in practice. What mattered was not that Italian and German assistance

might enable the Nationalists to defeat the Republicans, but that Italy should be obliged to withdraw from Spanish territory if and when the nationalists won. Provided she did, there would be no need to fear Franco's gratitude to his friends. Mussolini would win an empty victory of prestige. It might well be worse if Franco lost. For then the Italians would find excuses for holding on to some of the Spanish territory that they occupied and controlled. Could the Spanish question have been isolated from the general issue of Fascism versus democracy in Europe, the British government would have been justified. Mussolini in fact gained nothing solid from the success of the Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War. Psychologically, however, non-intervention had the most deplorable effect on the democracies.

Russia's Spanish policy thus amounted to an attempt to drive the French government into withstanding the Fascist Powers against the will of the British. A tug-of-war took place between Moscow and London, like that earlier one over republican Germany's entry into the League of Nations. And again London pulled the harder. Russian intervention, from the British government's point of view, offended in every respect. It tended to lengthen the civil war, which Britain wished to see finished as soon as might be in one way or another. It nearly overcame the cautious Blum. It created difficulties for the National government at home. It cemented the collaboration of the Axis Powers, and afforded an opportunity for an ominous association between them and Japan. It accentuated the division of Europe into two ideological camps of Fascists and anti-Fascists, the very last thing that British Conservatives desired, since they believed that it would make European reconciliation impossible and ultimately bring about war between Germany and Italy on one side and Britain and France on the other. Was that what Moscow really wanted? In any event, they were convinced that Soviet Russia would never be a dependable partner of the democracies. The astonishing series of Moscow trials, which were then proceeding, confirmed this opinion, for they seemed to be evidence of a domestic convulsion rendering the Soviet Union incapable of effective action for some time in the international field.

## § 2. *Munich*

Anglo-Russian friction over Spain was not a matter of conflicting interests, since both countries stood to lose by the satisfaction of Axis ambitions, but of divergent policies, aggravated by misunderstanding and prejudice. No improvement became probable when Baldwin was succeeded as Prime Minister by Neville Chamberlain. Under Baldwin the National government, having lost its bearings in the international storm, had drifted into a false position. While Eden, the Foreign Secretary, went on proclaiming to the British people and the world that the government still put its trust in collective security, its actions belied his words. The truth is that the government had no definite

idea what to do and lived from day to day, avoiding any decision that could be avoided and waiting for some political miracle to turn up and save Europe, now plainly sliding into the abyss. It is unquestionable that Eden sincerely desired to resuscitate the League of Nations. But, whatever his personal opinions, he could do nothing to stop the march of events. A heroic effort, of which the National government was totally incapable, would have been required, an effort possibly beyond any conceivable British government at the time.

The new Prime Minister was a man, not of heroic, but at least of decided views, which, it became evident, were incompatible with those of his Foreign Secretary. A policy of procrastination, wrapped up in empty phrases, did not commend itself to his lucid, limited mind. A choice must be made: either war with Germany and Italy, or peace with them. Since war, even a successful war, would be an immeasurable calamity for Britain, it was necessary to pursue peace to the extreme limit. Hitherto the British government in its attitude towards the dictators had continually blown hot one minute and cold the next. No wonder under this treatment they were restless and prickly. Naturally they suspected that Britain was dissembling her enmity and preparing to strike back when the right occasion came. Old controversies must be forgotten and outworn conceptions like collective security, with which the Axis leaders would have nothing to do, discarded. A fresh start must be made with a clean slate, and appeasement, up to now tentative and spasmodic, set going systematically. If Eden did not agree, he would have to be got rid of. The musty odour of Geneva clung offensively round him anyway.

There are not many chapters of British history so melancholy as the story of how Chamberlain's pursuit of appeasement led to the destruction of Czechoslovakia at Munich. Except for membership of the League of Nations, Britain had few interests in common with that country. The fact that it was the principal state of the Little Entente and had since the Peace Conference been the corner-stone of the French system of alliances in central Europe did not make for Anglo-Czechoslovak cordiality. Nor did the treaty of mutual assistance between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia that had been concluded at the time of the Franco-Soviet Pact. Both these treaties were disliked in London. But when Hitler seized Austria, once more with impunity, it became probable that his next move would be against the Czechs and that a supreme crisis was approaching, in which Britain could not but be involved. By the German occupation of Austria the unfortunate Czechs were held as if in the grip of a huge pair of pincers, liable to close and annihilate them at any moment that Hitler judged convenient. One thing only could preserve them, intervention by their French and Russian friends. That would mean another July, 1914, with Czechoslovakia in the part of Serbia. And it would be impossible for Britain to stay out of the conflict. Chamberlain determined that, if he could prevent it, Britain would not find herself at war for the sake of the Czechs. Had Germany not a certain case against them on the ground of Czech oppres-

sion of the large German minority? Did there not seem a good chance that Hitler, having brought this minority into the Reich, might be content, or more moderate, for the future?

The problem was how, before Hitler's patience gave out, to induce the Czechs to submit quietly to mutilation, without a struggle compelling France and Russia to honour their treaty obligations. France held the key; for, by the terms of the treaties, Russian action was conditional on prior intervention by France. Moreover, Russia was not in a position to act effectively apart from France. Luckily the French were not disposed to be difficult. In fact, dispirited and divided, they were only too glad to place the odium of abandoning Czechoslovakia on British shoulders; thus making quite sure that, if war did come, England would be bound to support them. Having the French in his pocket, Chamberlain could afford to disregard both the Czechs and the Russians. It appeared essential to warn off the latter, seeing that no peaceful arrangement with Germany, in his opinion, would be practicable unless the Soviet Union were excluded. This conviction, it need hardly be said, Hitler had been at pains to instil into French and British minds ever since the Soviet Union joined the League. The Czechoslovak question, then, should be, and was, settled by Germany and Britain as principals, with Italy and France obediently following the lead of their senior partners and the rest of Europe left out of account altogether.

From a Russian point of view the Munich Conference seemed both humiliating and damaging in the highest degree. Soviet Russia's position as a great European Power had been recognized by her election as a permanent member of the League Council. It had been consolidated by the share she took in the proceedings of the League since her entry and by the Franco-Soviet Pact. In the Spanish question, though her support of the republican government had been unpopular, the right of her representative to sit on the Non-Intervention Committee with those of the other four great Powers of Europe was conceded. Now she was expelled from the councils of the great Powers and treated like a second-class state. Yet, as an ally of Czechoslovakia, she had as much right as France to make her voice heard on this issue and more than England or Italy. Did Europe think that the largest nation of the Continent could be ignored?

But Munich came not only as a blow to Soviet pride and prestige. It implied the complete failure of the policy of co-operation with the democracies that had been pursued by Moscow since Hitler obtained power in Germany. The Western Powers had surrendered the Bohemian bastion, the last obstacle to German domination over central Europe. Did it not clearly signify that they had abandoned hope of further resistance to German expansion and decided to save themselves at any cost, by diverting Fascist attentions to the other side of Europe? The Nazis, from Hitler downwards, made no secret of their dream of pushing the boundaries of the Reich eastwards and securing the riches of the Ukraine for Germany to exploit. It was Franco-British opposition to this project that constituted the real reason for German hostility to the



Western Powers. If they gave proof that they no longer desired to hinder the drive to the east, Hitler would stop showing his teeth at them and they could look forward to a tranquil, though inglorious, old age. So Chamberlain doubtless believed, and he had won over the French to his belief in appeasement. Sunk into apathy and disgrace, France had disowned the Franco-Soviet Pact and cowered behind her Maginot Line, unmindful of what happened beyond the Rhine. Munich was only a beginning. Its logical, inevitable, sequel must be a degeneration of France and Britain until they became mere vassals of Germany, Fascist or semi-Fascist satellites of the great Fascist sun, as Italy had already become. Then the Soviet Union would in truth be faced with that united front of capitalist Europe which Communists had always feared.

This was not all fantasy, and it is hardly surprising that Moscow felt enraged and afraid. The fact that things did not turn out quite so badly as they might have done may be attributed to Hitler rather than to the French and British governments. In all history there has, perhaps, never been a diplomatic victory so extraordinary as Hitler's at Munich. Without firing a shell he had split, confounded and demoralized his adversaries, reversed the verdict of Versailles and put his country back where Bismarck had left her. Indeed, in five years of peace the crafty demagogue had, to all appearance, accomplished more than that great master of diplomacy with the help of three successful wars. If only he had had the sense to let the precious fruit ripen quietly ! Just a little patience, a few years of self-restraint and moderation, and Europe might have fallen of its own accord into his gaping jaws. He could have learnt from the careers of earlier conquerors, had he been capable of learning anything, that to subdue the world is easier than to hold it.

To others beside Russians it seemed incredible that Chamberlain could be so blind to the character of Hitler and the nature of the Nazi system as to suppose that Munich would be anything but an incentive to the ruler of Germany to plan new conquests. And yet it is apparent that this obstinate and ignorant man really imagined that he had brought back "peace with honour" from the four-Power meeting in Germany. His offer of guarantee to Poland, an obviously dangerous, not to say rash, step in the circumstances, is inexplicable unless the surprise and indignation expressed by him at Hitler's perfidy in swallowing up the remnants of Czechoslovakia six months after Munich were genuine. To believe that the British government deliberately intended to allow the Germans a free hand in eastern Europe is to credit it with an insight and a ruthlessness beyond its capacity. If Hitler, however, had not been intoxicated by his victory, he might well have obliged the Western Powers to acquiesce in a gradual extension of German control over the Continent through diplomatic and economic pressure. His violence both gave them the opportunity to resist and left them no alternative. The trick of Munich, just exposed in such a flagrant manner, could not conceivably be played over again at Poland's expense. Public opinion in the democracies, angry and uneasy, would not stand a repetition of that shameful conclave.

Few people assert to-day that the policy of appeasement ever had the smallest chance of preserving peace. It can be defended, if at all, only on the grounds that it enabled the Western Powers to gain time and convince those who still needed convincing that the Fascist dictators were unappeasable and insatiable. Would the alternative policy, of an anti-Fascist coalition led by Britain, France and Russia, have prevented the second World War? We cannot be sure, but we may think it might have succeeded, possibly as late as the Czechoslovak crisis, even, though this is very unlikely, as late as the Polish crisis in the summer of 1939. Or, if war had come, that the conditions would have been less favourable to Hitler. Yet we should bear in mind the tremendous difficulties in the way of an Anglo-Franco-Russian combination:

First of all, the ill-omened parallel of the Triple Entente must be taken into account. The example of that earlier attempt to restrain Germany by encircling her exercised a chilling influence that can hardly be exaggerated. Many people did not fully realize that, evil as the consequences of the first World War were, they would have been far surpassed if Germany had won. And, incidentally, they also forgot that, without Russian sacrifices for the first three years of the war on the Eastern front, the Allied line in France must have been broken. The devilish and destructive character of modern warfare, the idea that Europe could not survive another conflict on the scale of the last, imbued all classes in the democracies with a pacifism so deep that it produced an hysterical unwillingness to recognize facts. It was this, far more than the sympathy with Fascist principles of which democratic leaders were accused by their political opponents, that accounted for their failures and the cheap triumphs of Hitler and Mussolini. Pacifism, a virtue of the strong, is in the weak a vice. Chamberlain thought himself a Pitt, but he was merely a Pétain.

Again, the estrangement, partly traditional and partly ideological, between French and British on one side and Russians on the other exceeded that of the years before 1914. To the latter the Western Powers were the old and worst enemies of the Revolution, no longer so aggressive as Germany only because they were increasingly effete. The natural affinity of their rulers was with the Fascists, and they would always be unreliable allies of the Soviet Union. French and British statesmen had just as low an opinion of Soviet Russia and the Communists. On both sides prejudice distorted the truth. While Russians were over suspicious of the sincerity of Western democracy, the military power and political stability of the Soviet state were gravely underestimated in France and Britain. It could not be denied that impressive material results had been achieved and that backward Russia had become a great industrial country. Were there not, however, notorious deficiencies to set against these achievements? Above all, did plain indications of dissension in the inner circles of the government and the highest ranks of the Red Army not show that the Russian colossus, under Stalin as under Nicholas II, had feet of clay?

Too much weight may be attached to misconceptions of the kind just mentioned. Prejudice had not been sufficient to prevent the Franco-Soviet Pact in 1935, any more than the Dual Alliance of the eighteen-nineties, and British objections, had they been based on distrust of Communism alone, would not have been so hard to overcome. Another, and greater, obstacle existed. Tsarist Russia had had a common frontier with Germany, and also with her ally, Austria-Hungary. But the western frontier of Russia now ran hundreds of miles further to the east and the whole breadth of Poland separated her from Hitler's Reich, while she was even more distant from the junior Fascist partner, Italy. Soviet, therefore, unlike Tsarist, Russia, could not directly threaten German security, or that of Germany's ally, in the east. There could be no immediate Russian attack, as in August 1914, on Germany unless pre-concerted plans had been drawn up for Russian troops to cross Polish territory, unless, that is to say, Poland were brought into the Anglo-Franco-Russian coalition. But the Poles had no inclination to enter an anti-German coalition, or to permit Russian armies into their country. To do so would be to turn it, as in the first World War, into a battlefield. Moreover, if the Russians did come in, would they ever leave? There was only one thing of which the Poles were more afraid, an agreement by Germany and Russia to partition Poland between them, following the precedent set by the Empress Catherine and the kings of Prussia at the end of the eighteenth century. Soon after the Nazi revolution they had concluded a non-aggression treaty with Germany, and had since displayed a determination not to offend their formidable western neighbour. Even when, after Hitler's seizure of Prague and Memel, it became evident that they were marked out as his next victims, they remained recalcitrant and evasive in spite of Franco-British efforts to persuade them.

At the end of the first World War France and Britain had encouraged the formation of a belt of minor states between Germany and Soviet Russia, with the aim of preventing Germans and Bolsheviks from joining hands. It was precisely these states whose existence now most seriously hindered attempts to construct a strong defensive front against Nazi Germany. The same reluctance to serve as a Russo-German battlefield shown by Poland manifested itself also in the Baltic states and Roumania. The Western Powers and the Soviet Union might be in perfect agreement about the necessity of standing together in face of the Fascist menace. Yet if they failed to induce Poland and the other border states to combine with them their agreement was built on sand. It may be said that the French and British ought to have, and could have, compelled these countries to see that their only hope of salvation lay in adhering to an anti-Fascist coalition. But how? China, Abyssinia, Spain, Austria and Czechoslovakia were arguments more powerful than anything that London and Paris could say or do. The Poles and the rest suspected both the good will of the Russians and the vigour of the British and French. Their suspicions were not without foundation. Whether, if the coalition had come into being, it would have averted

war and the German conquest and devastation of the border states is doubtful. By 1939, at least, it would have probably come too late.

In western, as well as eastern, Europe a multiplicity of small states made for insecurity and smoothed the path of an unscrupulous aggressor. The return of Belgium, for instance, to a policy of neutrality after Hitler's occupation of the Rhineland was well designed to suit German interests. One of the main reasons for the comparative peacefulness of the nineteenth century is that Europe contained fewer weak nations then than before or since. The predominance of five great Powers, Great Britain, France, Prussia (later Germany), Austria and Russia gave the Continent a stability that has never been equalled during any other period. The break-up of the Hapsburg Empire, as a result of defeat in the war of 1914-1918, had drawbacks from the point of view of European peace. But the large territorial losses of Russia, and her consequent withdrawal from Continental affairs, amounted to a worse disaster. After the war a precarious order was maintained on the Continent, Austria having been eliminated, Germany temporarily disabled and Russia thrust back behind her new frontiers. Germany and Russia, however, were bound to re-emerge sooner or later as leading Powers, and it could be foreseen that, when they did, a perilous disturbance of the unstable equilibrium established by the victory of the Western Powers would occur. It was chiefly because of this contingency that efforts to secure disarmament proved so unavailing even before the rise of Hitler. So long as Franco-British ascendancy could be preserved Europe seemed safe, But afterwards? A constant anxiety troubled the hearts of statesmen. Geneva, no doubt, offered some shelter. Yet Geneva might turn out to be a house of cards. What assurance had they that a revived Germany and Russia would be willing to acquiesce in the permanent alienation of the territories lost by Kaiser William and Tsar Nicholas? And, if the two most powerful states east of the Rhine remained both discontented, the outlook was sombre. When Hitler became German Chancellor, indeed, and the threat from Germany increased, that from Russia declined; and the Soviet Union, in the interests of self-preservation, moved over to the side of the satisfied Powers. But, however willing the Soviet government might be to tread in the steps of its Tsarist predecessors, the new map of Europe and the facts of post-war history constituted a fatal impediment.

### § 3. *Stalin's Tilsit*

Soviet Russia, having renounced Tsarist ideas and ambitions, appeared until the eleventh hour to be resigned to, if not content with, her new boundaries and prepared to accept and underwrite the Europe of Versailles. There are, in fact, no grounds for supposing that the Communists would not have continued to respect the independence of the border states on their western frontier, had the general European situation not deteriorated to an extent that forced them to change their

minds. It was, we may imagine, immediately after Munich that Stalin began seriously to contemplate an alternative to the policy of collective security, an alternative that promised an escape from the spectre of a European league against the Soviet Union. If the Western Powers refused to co-operate with Russia in resistance to Germany, then Russia must seek safety by making her own terms with Hitler. Such a startling diplomatic somersault could not be easily accomplished, even by the experienced opportunists of the Kremlin, in view of Hitler's fanatical anti-Communist notions and Soviet leadership of the anti-Fascist cause. And it was risky. But desperate times required desperate measures.

The decisive moment came with Chamberlain's guarantee to Poland, after the extinction of what was left of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. For it seemed now that Hitler would be unable to bring off another success like that of the previous autumn. He must, if he attacked Poland, face a conflict with Britain and France ; and, should Soviet Russia also come to Poland's rescue, he would be involved in that war on two fronts that he desired above everything to avoid. Poland by herself could be dealt with in a few months at longest, before French and British help became effective ; but not Poland backed by Russia.

Had the problem a solution ? Yes, there was one way out : by striking a bargain with Moscow at Poland's expense. It would be a diplomatic masterpiece, a stroke to amaze the world, a Munich in reverse. Last year he had parted the democracies from Russia and bent them to his will. This time he would treat with Russia over the heads of the democracies. The result, he was confident, would be similar. When the Western Powers saw that they had been out-manoeuvred, they would acquiesce and Poland would fall to him with as little fuss as Czechoslovakia. In any case, a Russo-German arrangement in the East would leave him free, after Poland was crushed, to concentrate overwhelming forces against France and soon to dispose of her and her British ally.

The Soviet government resolved to make a new and a final effort to bring to life the long-projected anti-Fascist coalition, which in the interval between Munich and Hitler's entry into Prague had receded far into the shadows. It was now or never. As for the Western Powers, they were prepared at last to talk of an Anglo-Franco-Russian alliance. But they failed, in the Russian view, to give proof of sufficient determination. Was it because they had moral scruples about putting pressure on Poland to place herself entirely in Russian hands, or on the Baltic states to accept Russian assistance ? Or was it because they were afraid of hurting Axis feelings and still had hopes of an accommodation between Poland and Germany that would preserve them from war ? It did not matter. At the beginning of May, six weeks after Prague, the world learnt that Molotov had taken Litvinov's place as Soviet Foreign Commissar. There is a reason to think that the dismissal of Litvinov, the man who had brought the Soviet Union into the League of Nations, the author of the Franco-Soviet Pact, the advocate of collective security and, incidentally, a Jew, was Stalin's signal to Hitler of Russian willingness to treat with him. There could, at the time, only be surmise, and

the conversations between Berlin and Moscow that followed were veiled in secrecy.

Meanwhile negotiations with Paris and London went on throughout the summer months. It was impossible, after all, to foresee the course events would take, or whether Hitler was serious. Whatever the outcome, Stalin insured himself, while he held the strings in his hand, against a hostile Reich extending to the borders of the U.S.S.R., stronger than ever and ready for the next leap into the Ukraine. Either Hitler would get his war on two fronts, or he would be obliged to pay Russia's price for her benevolent neutrality while he strangled Poland. Hitler made his choice. Towards the end of August the veil was lifted, and the shattering news let loose that Ribbentrop was on his way to Moscow to sign a non-aggression pact with the Soviet government. A few days later, in the early hours of September 1st, German troops entered Poland and the second World War started.

Not without justification the Western Powers complained that they had been double-crossed. Up to the very eve of Ribbentrop's arrival in Moscow their negotiations with the Soviet authorities had continued, while Molotov behind their backs had been putting the final touches to the Russo-German agreement. It must, however, be confessed that they had slight cause to expect loyal treatment. For years, Russians might point out, Litvinov had tried every means of persuasion to induce them to make a stand against the Fascist dictators before it became too late. He had been constantly rebuffed and deluded. Britain and France had committed at Munich an act of treachery against both Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia. It was true that they appeared to have been tardily converted after Prague to the policy that Russians had urged. But had they really? Why, if so, their hesitation to assent to the sole method by which the protection they promised to Poland could be made effective? It was their own fault that they had walked into a trap. They could not say they had received no warning.

The clue to Russian duplicity is to be found in the unfathomable distrust that Communists entertained for every other nation, for the democracies only a little less than for the Fascist dictatorships. There is no denying that after her entry into the League of Nations Russia fulfilled her obligations under the Covenant, until it ceased to have any validity, with a good faith that some of the great Powers conspicuously failed to display; and the same may be said of her obligations under the treaties with France and Czechoslovakia. No profit had come from virtue. Even if the British and French were now genuinely ready for an agreement with the Soviet government, war by the summer of 1939 was barely avoidable, and, should it come, the Soviet Union would in all likelihood bear the brunt of it. We must remember that, in dealing with the Western Powers on one side and Germany on the other, Stalin had to count on extreme weakness in the former and consummate cunning in the latter. He could not be certain that the democracies, in view of their past records, would not fail in the hour of trial. There were

numbers of influential people in France and England who did not hesitate to proclaim their reluctance to die for Danzig. The same governments that had so deeply committed themselves to appeasement were still in power in Paris and London, and it would be ingenuous to rely implicitly on the sincerity of their conversion to the principle of collective resistance to aggression. For his part, Hitler was not the man to stand by and watch an overwhelming combination being built up against him. If an Anglo-French-Russian coalition became a fact he would alter his tactics, and might resort to the alternative policy of winning over the Poles by an appeal to their ambitions and their hatred of Russia, so as to use Poland as a springboard for attack on the U.S.S.R.

Once the crucial decision had been taken to open conversations with Germany, everything told in favour of a Russo-German bargain. The Western Powers were dilatory, feeble and distant. Hitler was potent, close at hand and completely devoid of scruple. By rejecting his advances Russia would probably be plunged into a mortal conflict with Germany without receiving, it might be, effective assistance from the Western Powers. By accepting, she would gain a breathing space at the worst. Perhaps, if war followed between Germany and the Western Powers, both sides would be reduced to exhaustion and the Soviet Union would escape altogether. Moscow's agreement with Germany and the obliteration of Poland, the necessary consequence of the pact, would permit Soviet Russia to push her frontiers further west and thus improve her strategic position in case of an eventual invasion. It was Russia's turn to make an experiment in appeasement, and Chamberlain would find that the Communists were apt pupils.

There is little advantage, on the whole in arguing about the relative responsibilities of Britain, France and Russia for the catastrophe of 1939, any more than for that of 1914. In all three countries fear of the German war-machine, with Hitler in control of it, and concern for their own immediate safety proved stronger than higher considerations. Nor have the minor Powers that chose to take refuge in a short-sighted neutrality much cause for self-congratulation. None of them has endured a harsher fate than Poland. But sympathy for that tortured nation should not prevent us from recognizing that the Poles, now as in previous centuries, have themselves to thank in large part for their misfortunes. Dangerously situated as they were after the first World War between two great Powers, both of which had good reasons for disliking them, they made the most of every disadvantage they possessed. They quarrelled with all their neighbours successively, and sometimes simultaneously. They were the first to try by appeasing Hitler to direct his wrath on to the heads of others, although it should have been obvious that they were making their own fate more certain, and that Nazi Germany would never permanently tolerate the existence of the Poland of Versailles. Foolishly aspiring to be a great Power, Poland attempted to build up a block of small states under her leadership from the Baltic to the Black Sea between the Soviet Union and Germany and outside the sphere of influence of either. Not only was it a scheme far beyond

Polish strength to carry out, but it was one calculated to unite Germany and Russia in opposition to her, the most deadly of prospects to Poland. Conceivably, the Poles might have escaped their doom by surrendering the Polish Corridor and other territory to Hitler and becoming his accomplices in an attack on Russia. But, since they would not, the sole alternative to a fourth partition of their country between Germans and Russians lay in securing Russian good will and support.

What prevented Russo-Polish collaboration? Hereditary enmity might be profound. But this did not appear a time for sentiment. By the treaty of 1921 that ended the war between Soviet Russia and Poland the latter had obtained a very favourable eastern frontier. It had, however, been freely accepted by the Soviet government, and there were no signs of Russian irredentism. The Catholic Poles might detest Communism, but the Soviet Union had been a peaceful neighbour, whereas a capitalist Russia would certainly have tried to regain at least the lost White Russian and Ukrainian territories. Only the overthrow of Tsarism, in fact, had assured Poland of any independent existence at all. If sentiment must not be left out, then the Poles were Slavs like the Russians and had a common racial interest in withstanding the Teutonic menace. Both countries were allies of France, and it was not for want of French counsel that they remained apart. Before Munich the three Slav allies of France in eastern Europe, Russia, Poland and Czechoslovakia, constituted a strong barrier against German aggrandizement, provided they stood together. The value of the combination depended on Poland's relations with the other two, since the geographical position of Poland made her the link between them. Polish co-operation was essential in order that Soviet aid to Czechoslovakia should be effective. And at the same time, a German occupation of either Czechoslovakia or Poland would be fatal to the other. These were such elementary truths that Czechoslovakia and Poland ought without difficulty to have been persuaded to reach an understanding with each other and with Russia. The Czechs and Russians were willing to do so. The Poles persistently refused. Not only that, but they deliberately worked against Czechoslovakia and Russia; and, when Hitler triumphed over the former at Munich, the Poles stabbed her in the back and seized a portion of her territory. After this what pity could they expect from anyone, least of all the Russians, when the inevitable blow fell upon them?

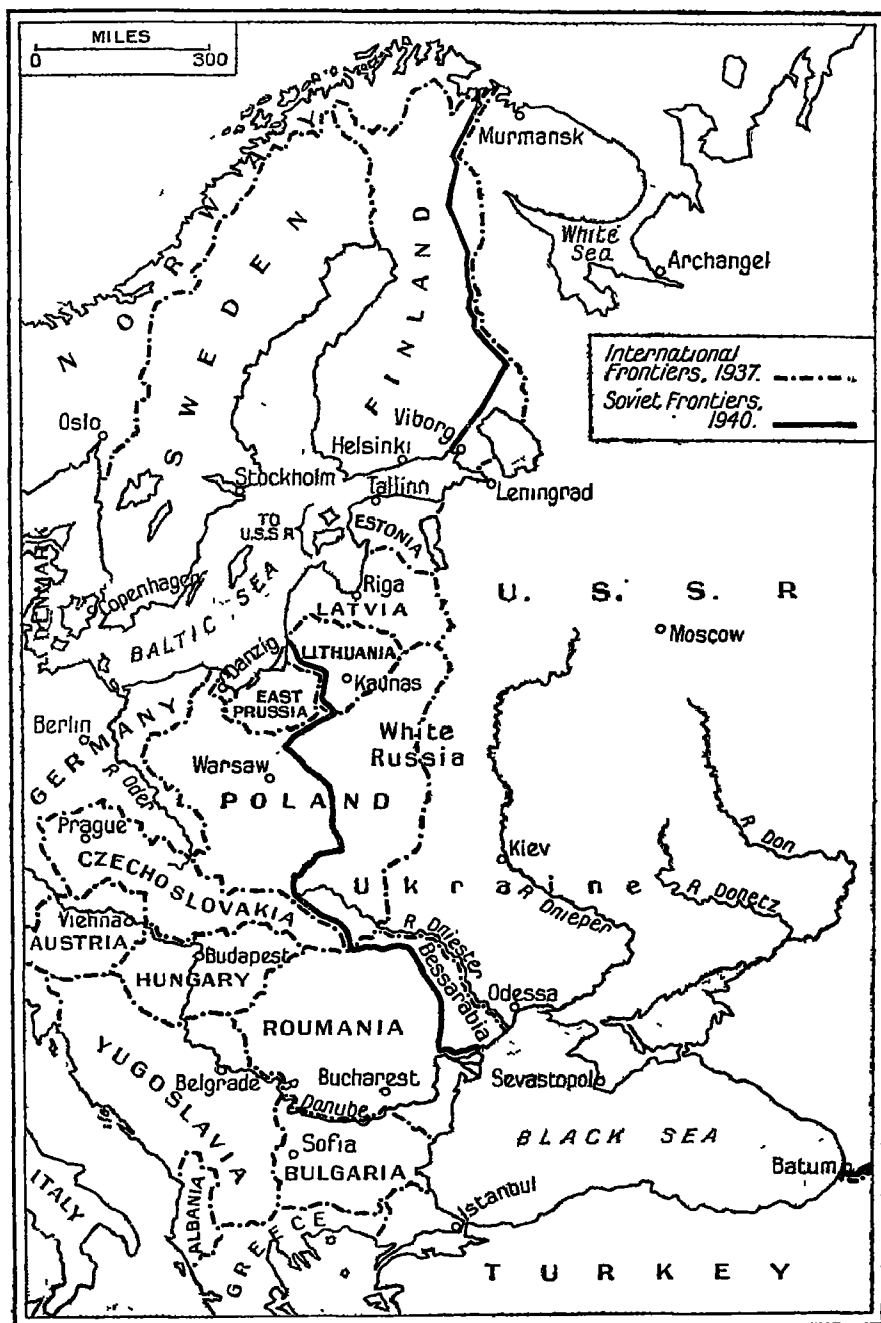
It is not recorded how Stalin greeted Ribbentrop when the Nazi Foreign Minister entered the Kremlin to sign the Russo-German pact of non-aggression. We may assume that he did not repeat the well-known words addressed by the Emperor Alexander I to Napoleon on the raft at Tilsit. For the memory of Tilsit is not cherished by Russians. We may also assume that those words were not far absent from the mind of either man. There was, in many ways, a striking similarity in the circumstances. In both cases a conquering dictator had arisen in Europe, who had been able by fraud and violence to extend his sway over neighbouring states. The threat had brought together the two outlying great Powers, Britain and Russia; but their



partnership had broken down and Russia had come to terms with the conqueror, leaving the egotistical islanders to look after themselves. Although Stalin had not suffered an Austerlitz and a Friedland, his situation was essentially the same as Alexander's. Outwardly, the Russo-German agreement appeared one between equals. In reality Hitler, like Napoleon, was the victor, and Stalin, like Alexander, the vanquished, if only in the diplomatic field. Russia did, indeed, on this as on the earlier occasion, receive tangible benefits. Freed from the immediate danger of invasion, she could enlarge her territory and strengthen her frontiers while the other Powers fought each other. Not to mention the pleasure of taking revenge on the Western Powers for Munich and paying back a debt owed to the Poles. But all this was at the cost of a humiliating and degrading feat of political acrobatics. The Soviet Union, the model socialist state, the champion of anti-Fascism, the embodiment of working-class aspirations in every country on earth, had become the friend and accomplice of Nazi Germany. Help must be given the ogre of Berlin to achieve yet greater victories, in the knowledge that he had not abandoned, and hardly pretended to abandon, his ultimate design of seizing the Ukraine, dismembering Russia and destroying the Soviet system. Hitler's motives were even more transparent than Napoleon's had been. If, after wiping out Poland, he managed to compel or persuade the Western Powers to make peace with him, who could doubt that he would disavow his engagements to Moscow as lightly as he had broken every other promise?

On hearing of Ribbentrop's visit the ordinary Russian must have felt something like the bewilderment of Nicholas Rostov in *War and Peace*, when he witnessed the mutual courtesies between his adored Tsar and the Corsican adventurer. "If our sovereign chooses to recognize Napoleon as emperor and to conclude an alliance with him," burst out the young officer, torn between loyalty to Alexander and humiliation at what he saw, "it must be right for some reason, and if we once begin to criticize and judge, there will soon be nothing sacred. We shall end by denying the existence of God—of anything." The Soviet public seems to have been just as unprepared for the news of the pact with Hitler as the British or French, or, indeed, the German. Sir Bernard Pares relates that he was in Moscow until five days before it was signed. Not merely did he have no inkling of the event about to happen, but anti-Nazi propaganda was still being broadcast and official speeches in favour of Anglo-Soviet friendship still being made up to the time he left. Many a young Red Army officer might have expressed thoughts not so very dissimilar, though doubtless in different language, from Tolstoy's Nicholas Rostov.

Napoleon and Alexander at Tilsit had indulged in grandiose visions of a world shared between them. The Tsar, dazzled for a time by the genius of his new friend, was too intelligent and too conscious of the disapproval of his countrymen to remain deluded for long. As for Napoleon, he had not the slightest intention of sharing the world with anyone. He only meant to win over Alexander and induce Russia to



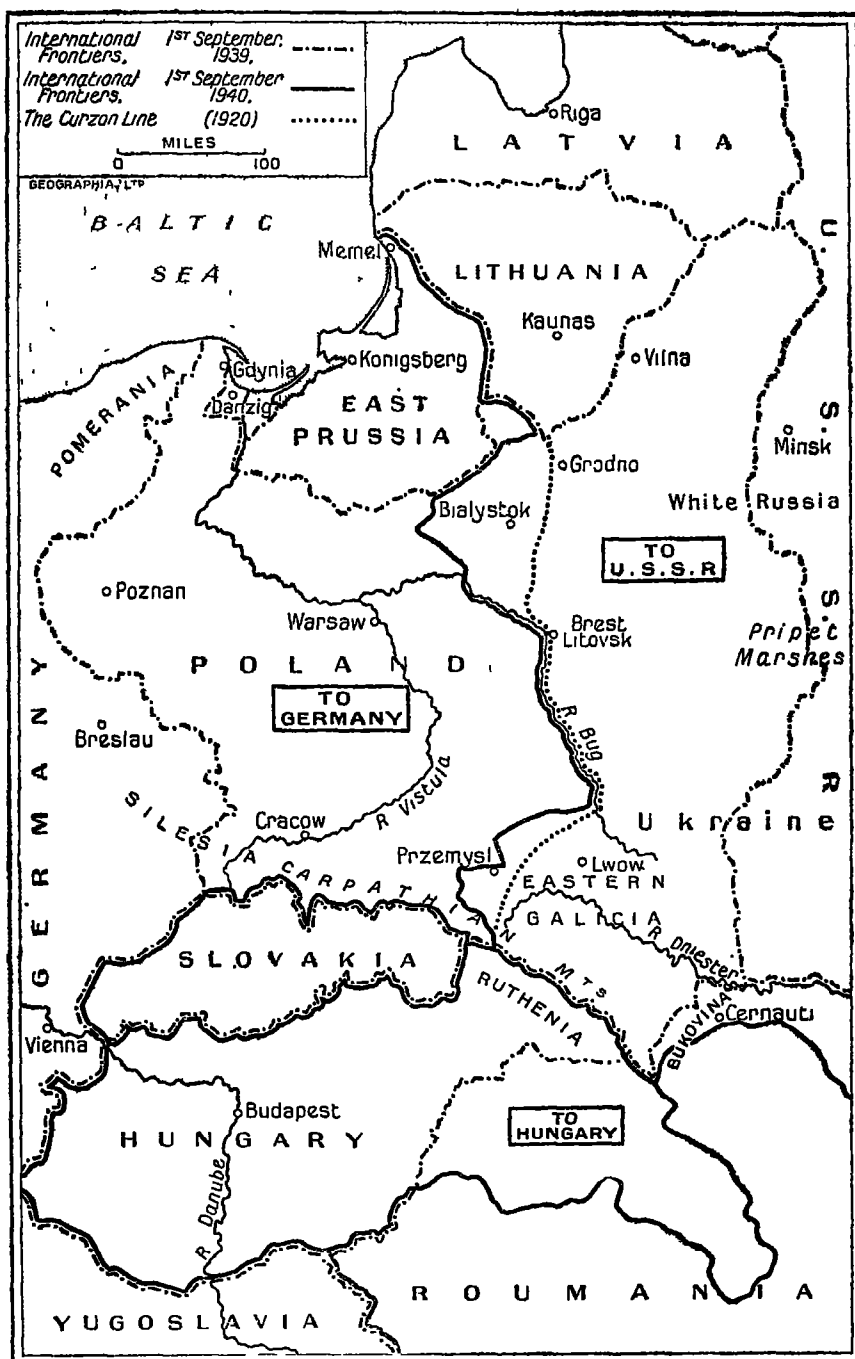
THE WESTERN FRONTIERS OF THE U.S.S.R.

accede to his Continental System, without the inconvenience of having to go to St. Petersburg to dictate peace. Since Russia in spite of defeats was still powerful, it was necessary both to humour her and to keep her occupied. Hence the encouragement he gave the Tsar to enrich himself at the expense of his neighbours. Moreover, a Russian attack on Sweden would be directly in the interests of the French Empire, because the Swedes were faithful allies of England. All this fitted in well with Alexander's desire to revert to the anglophobe policy of his father, Paul, and, at the same time, to the anti-Swedish and anti-Turkish traditions inherited from his grandmother, Catherine. Successes on the Baltic and the Black Sea would compensate Russia for Napoleonic conquests elsewhere in Europe and also fortify her in case of future French hostility. Tilsit was therefore followed by a breach with the British government, a Russian invasion and annexation of the Swedish province of Finland and a war with Turkey, which resulted in the cession by the Turks of Bessarabia.

If the circumstances that led Napoleon and Alexander to agreement resembled those that preceded the Russo-German Pact of August, 1939, the consequences bore an even more remarkable similarity. In each case there is estrangement from Britain and ambiguous collusion with the Continental tyrant. Russia ceases to be a good neighbour and imitates the unscrupulous policy of her new associate, extending her possessions and thus increasing her strategic elbow-room to the west. In each case there ensues a quarrel with the tyrant and a great invasion of Russia, in which all the subjugated peoples of Europe are arrayed against her and the nation is brought to the brink of destruction. In each case the logic of events forces British and Russians again to unite in resistance to the common enemy.

#### § 4. *Communists and Nazis in partnership*

It is obvious that there must have been some understanding between Hitler and Stalin, before the German attack on Poland, about a partition of Polish territory and Russia's claim to ascendancy in the region of the eastern Baltic. But Stalin cautiously made no move until the Germans were on the point of complete victory. It might, therefore, be plausibly, and truthfully, asserted that without Russian intervention the whole of Poland would have come under German occupation. The next step was to establish a Russian protectorate over the three Baltic states and Finland. With the exception of the last, they dared not refuse. Thus in the space of a few weeks, and without any opposition worth mentioning, since the Poles were in no state to fight against Russians as well as Germans, the greater part of the territorial losses of the Revolution could be recovered. The Finns, unfortunately, proved stubborn. They would not cede the strip of country on the Karelian isthmus or the military bases on the Gulf of Finland demanded by the Soviet government in order to safeguard Leningrad. So another method had to be tried. The war did not go as well as Moscow hoped, for the Finns defended



POLAND AND HER NEIGHBOURS

themselves skilfully and Russian tactics were crude. But there could be only one outcome with such a disparity of forces. Finland had to submit to terms harsher than she might have obtained at the beginning. Unlike, however, the Baltic nations, whose submission did not save them later from total extinction and incorporation in the U.S.S.R., Finland retained her independence. Finally, Roumania, under the pressure of an ultimatum, was compelled to hand over Bessarabia, thereby giving the Russians a hold on the north back of the Danube, affording protection to Odessa and the Ukraine and restoring a province whose seizure had never ceased to aggrieve Russian feelings. The parallel with Alexander I's conquests after Tilsit is very close. But Stalin might pride himself on having obtained more, and got it quicker and at a cheaper rate.

It is impossible to deny the immorality of these proceedings, which are not to be justified by vilifying the victims, even if we think that they asked for trouble. Yet allowance must be made for the circumstances. No act of violence was committed by Soviet Russia until the whole structure of European law and order, already undermined by the Fascist Powers, had been dissolved by Hitler's attack on Poland. And up to the last the Soviet government had not merely refrained from infringing the independence of neighbouring states but done what it could to preserve the rights of small countries against the Fascist threat. Only in the stress of extreme peril did it abandon its attempts, so ill-supported by the rest of the great Powers, and take thought for the immediate safety of Russia at the expense of others. Between an abuse of power by a strong nation for genuine purposes of self-defence and the calculated, lustful aggression of the Fascist states there is a world of difference.

Whether the gains secured by the agreement with Hitler could be held remained to be seen. In the meantime Russians were obliged to acquiesce in the triumphs of the author of *Mein Kampf*, supply raw materials and food to enable him escape the effects of the Franco-British blockade, and lend support to Axis diplomacy and propaganda. The Russian advance into Poland and the Baltic region was not altogether unwelcome to Hitler. For it served to increase Soviet complicity, moral and material, in German crimes, and would embroil the Western Powers, still more than the Russo-German Pact itself, with the Soviet Union. The eighteenth-century partitions of Poland had been one of the principal factors tending to promote amicable relations between Russians and Germans before 1914, since they shared an interest in preventing the revival of Polish independence. And a consciousness of guilt. Nor did the fall of Tsarism and the liberation of Poland after the first World War completely break the link. Russo-German hostility to Poland was at the bottom of the Treaty of Rapallo, the forerunner of the non-aggression treaty of August, 1939. Again, the Polish question had always been one of the chief obstacles, both before and after the Russian Revolution, to Franco-Russian friendship, because of France's traditional ties with Poland. The Western Powers, having gone to war on behalf of the Poles, would be bound, if they defeated Germany, to come into collision with Russia on this issue.

Consternation among the British and French at the news of the Russo-German Pact gave way to anger as the implications revealed themselves. With the onslaught on Finland indignation at Russian perfidy mounted to a climax. After the disappointment of early expectations of the collapse of Bolshevism, its opponents had never ceased repeating that it was a tyrannous system similar to the Fascist dictatorships, only worse, and prophesying that one day the two extremes would meet and unite against democracy. It seemed now that they were right. The cloven hoof of Communism could no longer be concealed. The pretence of co-operation with the League of Nations and the Western Powers had been exposed for what it was. Not only had the Bolsheviks made a thieves' bargain with Hitler and taken infamous advantage of the fate of Poland, but, without the shadow of an excuse, they had first tried to bully little Finland and then, when menaces failed, had trampled her savagely under foot. So much for Moscow's hypocritical declarations of respect for other peoples and abhorrence of imperialist greed. For their part, sympathisers with Soviet Russia in France and Britain were dumbfounded. Had they been mistaken all along? Could there really be nothing to choose between Hitler and Stalin? It was too bad to be believed. Yet the evidence of facts appeared utterly damning. Soviet stock fell lower than at any time since November, 1917. Even in the ranks of the faithful, the advance guard of the Western proletariat, there were mutterings and convulsions at this new and unprecedented test of their loyalty to the land of Lenin.

The British and French governments may have been touched by the heroism of the Finns, but they were also interested in the bearing of the Russo-Finnish struggle on their own war with Germany. It had not at that time become apparent what exactly the relationship between Berlin and Moscow amounted to. The Soviet government, indeed, proclaimed its neutrality in the conflict between the Western Powers and Germany. It was an "imperialist war" in which Soviet Russia would take no part, while believing Germany to be in the right, so long as she herself were not attacked. Would, however, Russia remain in all circumstances neutral? In any case, her neutrality was clearly far from impartial. There were reports of far-reaching plans for Russo-German economic collaboration, and Russian oil, wheat and minerals might largely nullify the blockade of Germany from which so much was hoped. In succouring the Finns the Western Allies would be doing themselves a service. Perhaps also they aimed, as the Soviet press suggested, at establishing a Scandinavian base of operations against Germany. So war materials were dispatched to Finland and volunteers encouraged to go to fight on the Finnish side. Someone hit on a clever idea. The moribund League of Nations, which had been quite forgotten, was dragged out into the light of day for a last time with the object of mobilizing world opinion against the Soviet Union.

Preparations were even made to send a considerable Franco-British force to aid the Finns. Luckily, Norwegian and Swedish opposition, and then the collapse of Finland, whose powers of resistance had been

overestimated in the West, frustrated this extravagant scheme. It would have suited Hitler excellently, and might even have converted the dubious partnership between Germany and Russia into a real alliance. Nor, if we can judge by the subsequent military history of 1940, would the Finns have benefited. The end of the Finnish war brought some alleviation of the ill-feeling between the democracies and Russia. The danger of direct conflict was lessened and the settlement imposed on Finland made a not unfavourable impression. For the terms were, it was plain, designed to protect the Soviet Union and not to enslave the Finns.

As, during the fateful spring of this year, the fortunes of the Western allies fell and those of Germany rose, the relations between the belligerents and Soviet Russia, though superficially unaltered, were necessarily affected. Russians lost any apprehension that an Anglo-French army, having conquered Germany, might march to Warsaw to restore Polish independence and an Anglo-French fleet steam into the Baltic. On their side, the Western Powers grew so worried about their own situation that they cared little what happened in eastern Europe. The German enemy was quite enough to contend with and to incur further Russian hostility as well would be madness. The fall of France must have come as a shock to Moscow. Hopes of a war of attrition in the West, like that of 1914-1918, were dissipated. Either complete German victory seemed at hand, or, at least, the elimination for a long time of any Continental opposition to Hitler. He would be free to turn his attention eastwards. The Soviet Union was left alone to face a victorious Germany, flushed with the confidence of incredible triumphs. Strong reasons, accordingly, existed for drawing closer to Britain, the only potential ally in sight and a country from which there could be little now to fear. The British, since their position had become so precarious, were only too willing to propitiate the one great Power on the Continent outside Hitler's orbit. No effort must be spared to keep Russia and Germany apart. Sir Stafford Cripps, who was known for his Soviet sympathies, was sent to Moscow as ambassador with the object of doing all that could be done to effect an Anglo-Russian understanding.

Cripps's task was difficult; for the Russians, however much they might distrust Hitler, were highly nervous of offending him. He would be exasperated at the slightest show of cordiality to the British. And what good could come of encouraging them? Did it not appear more than probable that they would have to surrender to Germany, like the French, within a few months? The advances of Cripps were received, therefore, with cool reserve. On the other hand, it was prudent not to give the British up for lost too soon. They might manage to hold out as they had against Napoleon and, if Hitler tried to emulate the Corsican, their assistance might yet be needed. They did hold out. Once again, as in the days of Pitt, Britain saved herself by her exertions and Europe by her example. Another Grand Army, not less formidable than the original, stared impatiently and impotently from Boulogne at the white

cliffs of England, then turned about and started on the long road to Moscow.

Why did Hitler invade Russia? No doubt he imagined that the conditions of 1941 were so different from those of 1812 that he could succeed where Napoleon had destroyed himself. Napoleon made precisely the same mistake about Charles XII of Sweden. Once an aggressor has embarked on a course of unlimited conquest, prudent calculation becomes progressively harder, both from objective and psychological considerations. The French Empire was enormously extended after Tilsit. But instead of growing stronger it grew weaker. Every new advance brought new difficulties, to surmount which it became necessary to make a further advance. And all the time the conqueror's readiness to gamble increased and his ability to recognize facts declined. Hitler also was constrained, and stimulated, by the very magnitude of his victories to take greater and greater risks. He had failed, like the French Emperor, to bring the English to submission by reason of those accursed twenty miles of water. Russia was more accessible, and her defeat would make the ruin of the islanders certain. He had found Stalin, as Napoleon had found Alexander, an inadequately compliant partner and one who might become too powerful to be safe. But, in addition, he had designs of permanent conquest in invading Russia that Napoleon lacked. Not to mention his hatred of Communism, none the less real because it happened also to be convenient. If in one sense the invasion of 1941 was a repetition of that of 1812, in another, and more important, it was a continuation of the campaign of 1918 so awkwardly interrupted by Marshal Foch; the culmination of half a century of rivalry between two powerful states, of a secular conflict of Slav with Teuton. Napoleon's irruption appeared an historical accident compared to this supreme struggle to decide who should dominate the shores of the Baltic, control the Balkans and possess the golden soil of the Ukraine.

When the vast national and racial issues at stake between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia are contemplated, the ideological dispute takes a minor place. But, of course, it had a far from negligible influence. The two systems might, indeed, have continued to exist side by side for an indefinite time, had their interests so required. There was a superficial resemblance between them, in that both were dictatorships, depending on the support of organized parties with a monopoly of political power, whose loyalty was secured partly by devotion to a cause, partly by material advantage and partly by iron discipline. Both were alien to the democracies of the West, and had certain methods of rule in common, relentless propaganda, a secret police, suppression of every kind of non-conformity. Public opinion in both was without effect on the conduct of foreign affairs, so that the governments were free, unlike democratic governments, to pursue external policies as they thought fit.

The points of difference, however, were fundamental. And not merely of difference, for the ideals and ends of the two systems were totally opposed. One was counter-revolutionary, based on military and



capitalist interests, inspired by principles of national fanaticism. The other was Utopian in faith, cosmopolitan by tradition, popular if not democratic, intolerant of racial prejudice, pacific in outlook. The old Russian ruling class had been swept away; individual ownership of the means of production was a memory; the power of private capital had disappeared; a socialist society instituted; yet the revolutionary temper remained. These systems could meet but they could never marry. Only an entire absence of comprehension led the West to fear such a chimerical union.

Whatever hopes Stalin may have had after the fall of France that the Soviet Union could maintain its neutrality must have dwindled by the end of 1940 almost to vanishing point. Moscow and Berlin went on talking as if their relations were all that could be desired. Underneath, rivalry and mutual distrust accumulated. In the spring of 1941 German infiltration into the Balkan countries increased the strain, and disagreement over Bulgaria and Yugoslavia became too acute to be concealed. But the diplomatic resistance offered by Russia in the Balkans proved as feeble as the military opposition of Britain. One after another the Balkan states submitted to Hitler; Roumania and Bulgaria voluntarily, Yugoslavia and Greece ground to dust for daring to stand up against the Axis. Finland, too, in the north fell willingly under the sway of the conqueror. From the Arctic Ocean to Crete the hosts of Hitler and his vassals now assembled for the greatest campaign of history. Still the Soviet government persisted in its efforts to placate the implacable, and, while military counter-preparations were discreetly hurried forward, the utmost care was taken to avoid wounding German susceptibilities. There were even signs of a new wave of appeasement, and the British ambassador felt as chilly a wind as ever blow across the Moscow river from the direction of the Kremlin.

Up to this time the situation in the Far East favoured an Anglo-Russo-American alignment, since the government of Moscow had, like Britain and the United States, for long supported Chiang Kai-Shek, the former opponent of the Comintern, against Japan. When the Sino-Japanese struggle was renewed in 1937 the Chinese Communists had dropped their quarrel with him and united in face of the invader. Now the Japanese Foreign Minister, returning from Berlin and Rome, broke his journey at Moscow to sign a treaty of non-aggression with the Soviet government, another of those harmless-sounding agreements that usually presaged something unpleasant for somebody. In this case it formed an indispensable preliminary, from Japan's point of view, to Pearl Harbour. To Stalin also it came as a valuable gain, for it meant a Japanese refusal to join in the coming German attack on the Soviet Union. A second front in the Far East would have been disastrous. Every ounce of energy was needed in Europe to engage Hitler's Grand Army. In the same way Alexander had been able to purchase the neutrality of the Swedes and the Turks on the eve of Napoleon's invasion. But these were comparatively small mercies. The prospect in 1941, like that in 1812, seemed appalling. The German war-machine was the most

terrible ever known. And Germany could rely on the industrial resources of the whole Continent west of the Soviet borders in addition to military support from her satellites, particularly from the Finns and Roumanians, who burned to avenge their misfortunes of the previous year. While Russia was isolated and friendless. Only Britain and to a lesser extent the United States would offer any help, and they had not the means to render it immediate or effective. Soviet Russia, if she were to survive, must do so by her own strength, tenacity and skill. The world, as at the start of the Napoleonic invasion, held its breath, but it scarcely doubted the result.

## CHAPTER IX

### ALLIES AGAINST HITLER'S GERMANY (1941—1945)

#### § 1. *The German Invasion of Russia—The Anglo-Russian Treaty—The Surrender of Germany and Japan*

ON the morning of 22 June, 1941, the peoples of the Soviet Union were informed that at first light German forces, without any reason given, had attacked and entered Soviet territory, contrary to the treaty of non-aggression between the two countries which their own government had faithfully observed. So the Fascist onslaught, so long feared and warded off by such desperate shifts, had come at last, as suddenly as that equally wanton attack on another midsummer morning when a Cossack patrol challenged the first French sappers to cross the Niemen. The same evening the British Prime Minister broadcast from London. Any man or state, he declared, who fought against Nazi Germany would receive British aid. Any man or state who marched with Hitler was Britain's foe. It followed that Britain would lend whatever help she could to Russia, and appeal to all her friends and allies in every part of the world to take the same course. And it would be pursued to the end. The Soviet government, he added, had already been offered any technical or economic help which it might be possible or useful to give. It was, of course, inevitable that the great enemies of Hitler should draw together. Nevertheless, the promptitude of Churchill's actions and words were admirable and characteristic, all the more because of his personal record as an opponent of Communism. Molotov and Cripps soon signed a treaty in Moscow, by which the two nations undertook to grant each other support and assistance and promised not to make a separate peace with Nazi Germany. After so many vicissitudes, a common peril had brought Britain and Russia back to the point where they had been in 1917 at the outbreak of the Revolution, once more allies against Germany. Hitler had accomplished what Napoleon and William II did before him.

Poland had been disposed of in three weeks. As many months, according presumably to German calculations, would be ample time

to deal with Soviet Russia. A winter campaign, at least, was certainly not foreseen or provided for in Berlin. But though Hitler's armoured and mechanized columns penetrated quickly hundreds of miles beyond the Soviet frontier, things did not proceed according to plan. It was not an easy advance as it had been the last time German troops marched into Russia. The Red Army proved to be altogether unlike the demoralized mobs of 1918; or, indeed, the reluctant hordes driven forward by machine guns from behind that pro-Finnish sentiment had pictured at the time of the Russo-Finnish War. These Bolsheviks were tough, tougher than any enemy so far encountered by the Germans. They were well and abundantly armed. They fought with bitter determination to defend their country and their creed and single-minded hatred of the Fascist aggressors. Nor was it only the Red Army that resisted. The civil population obeyed Stalin's orders to carry off their corn and cattle, destroy what they could not remove and form bands of partisans to harass the invader from the rear.

Could there be anything surprising in all this, in the measure of courage and discipline shown by the Red Army, or the unity and self-sacrifice of civilians? Russian armies had always been formidable, as Germans ought to have known better than anyone else. And the partisans were only following the example of their forefathers during the Swedish and French invasions. If 1918 had been different, it was because a revolution had broken down all ordinary patterns of behaviour. But the circumstances of 1918 could not recur. Communist rule was as firmly established as Tsarist in the time of Peter the Great or Alexander I. Indeed more firmly, for the soldiers and citizens of the Soviet Union fought to preserve their revolutionary gains as well as their homes and their motherland.

The gigantic struggle on the Russian plains was watched with strained attention in every other country, not least in Britain. Would the German onrush be halted before Moscow was reached? Would effective opposition continue if the Red Army were compelled to withdraw to the Volga or still further east? And if not, what hope remained of British survival, once Hitler had obtained possession of the illimitable resources of the U.S.S.R., and could descend from the Caucasus and central Asia on the vital strategic centres of the Middle East, on the Persian Gulf and India? Doubtless there were Englishmen who saw with satisfaction the two leading totalitarian states locked in combat, the clash between those equally detestable and anti-democratic ideologies. It would be too much to expect some secret pleasure not to arise at the spectacle of the authors of the abominable compact of 1939 belabouring one another. But the chorus of praise for Russia and the Russians that rose to the British skies was mostly sincere. The sternest enemy of Communist principles felt moved to admiration by the scale and quality of Soviet resistance. A nation that could fight like that must be sound at the core. Soviet leadership, too, must be more efficient than had been supposed. Communism might be a harsh, repulsive system of government, but it was strong and, perhaps, more suited to the Russian people

than any other. Clearly, the Bolsheviks were allies worth having. Besides, Bolshevism was out of date. This was a national, not a revolutionary, war. Its heroes were not Marx and Engels, hardly even Lenin, but Prince Alexander Nevski, Peter the Great, the Tsarist generals, Suvorov and Kutusov.

It is usual in wartime for enemies to appear all black and friends all white. Yet the transformation of the British attitude to Soviet Russia after June, 1941, seemed wonderful. The Right applauded; the enthusiasm of the Left had no bounds; a tempest of sympathy swept the multitude, which declined to make subtle distinctions between our new allies and their government. The growth of pro-Russian sentiment on the outbreak of war in 1914 could not compare with these manifestations. Such was the reaction from the suspicious animosity of the last two years and the prejudices of the last twenty-four. Naturally, moments of embarrassment occurred at first. But, as the Red Army's defence stiffened, all reservations were discarded. It began to be entirely forgotten that the Soviet defenders of liberty and civilization had been called "Asiatic barbarians" and other uncomplimentary names a very short while ago.

The British had the most concrete of reasons for wishing the Red Army well. Since Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union air raids on our towns had practically ceased and the danger of invasion had disappeared. In return for these benefits, strenuous efforts were made, in concert with the Americans, to produce and ship munitions and supplies to Russia by all available routes; and also, short of attempting a large-scale landing on the Continent, to keep the Germans occupied and apprehensive as possible in the West. Did they suffice, however, for our own salvation as well as that of our Russian ally? That was the question which worried people in this country while Hitler's armies approached nearer and nearer to Moscow and streamed across the Ukraine. The Russians made no secret, in their anxiety, of a desire for more efficacious aid.

The crisis came with the onset of winter. In spite of a desperate struggle, continued imprudently long, to reach Moscow before the weather made progress impossible, the German advance slowed down and then stopped, almost within sight of the Kremlin. A great Russian counter-attack was launched, and for the first time since the invasion started the battle began to move westwards. Would the Retreat from Moscow of 1812 be repeated? Very nearly, as Hitler afterwards admitted. The Germans were forced back some distance, but they were not broken. The end of winter found them still menacing Moscow and Leningrad and masters of the Ukraine. While both sides had suffered enormous casualties, the Russians had also lost a considerable part of their European territory and, most serious of all, their principal industrial area with its indispensable coal and iron mines and armament factories. The summer campaign of 1942 would be hard and perilous. It might well be decisive unless a larger proportion of German troops than hitherto could be diverted on to other fronts.

Russians began to press with growing insistence for the creation of a "second front" in the West. When Molotov arrived in London in May to conclude the negotiations for a formal Anglo-Soviet treaty of alliance, superseding the agreement of the previous July, this must have been the matter uppermost in his mind. He was unable to extract from the British government the definite assurance of an expedition to the Continent that year. All he could obtain was some kind of conditional promise; and later that summer Churchill flew to Russia to tell Stalin that it could not be fulfilled; instead, an Anglo-American stroke in the Mediterranean theatre was being planned for the autumn. It proved a dark year, until near the end, for the United Nations. Extraordinary calamities in the Far East at the beginning were followed by alarming successes for enemy submarines in the Atlantic and by an unexpected and dangerous reverse in Libya. On the Russian front the invaders maintained their positions in the north and the centre, and in the south managed to force the defenders back to the Volga and the Caucasus. But in the last quarter the defeat of Rommel at El Alamein, the Anglo-American occupation of French North Africa and the German failure at Stalingrad combined to alter the whole aspect of affairs and brought the war against Hitler to its turning point. Henceforward the tyrant's downfall was only a question of time.

If written articles could determine the relations between two peoples, Anglo-Russian friendship would have been secured for a long period to come. For the treaty of May, 1942, was as explicit as could be hoped. Not only did it reaffirm, in rather wider terms, that of July, 1941, but it provided that the partnership of the two nations should continue after the war. They were to maintain a defensive alliance against Germany for twenty years, or until a satisfactory collective system for the preservation of peace had been established, and together to organize order and prosperity in post-war Europe. These provisions went beyond any earlier undertaking by Britain to a Continental Power. At the end of the first World War we were committed only to the obligations of the League Covenant, whose value was in inverse proportion to their universality. It is true that we subsequently agreed at Locarno to guarantee the Rhine frontier. The guarantee, however, was given to Germany as well as to France. A closer parallel is the Treaty of Chaumont, concluded by Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia, the four leading opponents of the French Empire, in the closing stage of the conflict with Napoleon. The British government bound itself in that treaty to co-operate with the other three great Powers until the defeat of Napoleon had been accomplished, and to remain in alliance with them against France when peace was made, also, significantly, for twenty years.

There is every reason to assume the sincerity of the parties to the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, and to regard it as one of the most important diplomatic instruments in British and Russian history. At the same time experience has shown that the worth of a treaty depends less on its letter, and even on the spirit in which it is made, than on the circumstances that attend and follow its conclusion. The Treaty was founded on a

common Anglo-Russian enmity to Nazi Germany and, so long as the German threat appeared actually or potentially in both British and Russian eyes to outweigh other considerations, it would probably govern their policies towards each other. But not necessarily any longer. Its articles, especially those relating to post-war political and economic collaboration, represented an aspiration as much as a design. In the case of treaties made by allies in time of war the immediate danger is the motive force and it is not to be expected, nor indeed possible, that they should concern themselves very closely with an uncertain future.

At the moment when the Treaty was signed the fortunes of war were fluctuating. The Russian winter campaign had been a grave blow to Hitler, but he retained the advantage over his enemies and could yet complete what he had begun the previous summer. From the British point of view, it might be a question of waiting until the offensive could be taken in full strength by Anglo-American forces. It seemed to Russians that there was no time to lose. They wanted British and American good will and supplies, but above all they wanted the Second Front. When it failed to materialize, they did not conceal their disappointment; and some strain was inevitably put on the Anglo-Russian alliance. There could be no dispute about the strength of the Soviet case. It was set forth with mathematical cogency in Stalin's speech in November, 1942, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, at a date when the battle of Stalingrad had not yet been decided and German conquests of Russian territory were at their peak. The principal cause, he declared, of recent German successes in the south lay in the fact that Hitler had been able, in the absence of a second front in Europe, to establish a large numerical superiority in this sector of the line. Whereas in the first World War only 85 out of 220 German divisions faced the Russians, and counting Germany's allies only 127 in all, not less than 179 out of 256 divisions of Germans were attacking the Soviet Union in September, 1942. Together with the satellite contingents, Roumanians, Finns, Hungarians and others, that made up a total of 240 divisions, more than three million troops, on the eastern front. On the other hand only four German and 11 Italian divisions were in Libya and Egypt. The exact figures might be contested, but not the substantial accuracy of the statement. For nearly a year and a half, everyone must agree, Russia had had to sustain the onslaught of two-thirds of Hitler's forces. In so doing, the Russians had seen a large part of their country overrun and devastated and tens of millions of their people killed, wounded, made prisoners, deported, ill-treated, rendered homeless. Was all this consistent, taking into account the huge resources in men and materials of the British Empire and the United States, with their obligations to the Soviet government and people? Surely those masses of trained and equipped men standing practically idle in the British Isles could be put to a better use for the common purpose?

Stalin delivered his speech only a few days before the Anglo-American landings in Algeria and Morocco. Subsequent Allied successes in North Africa, and even the invasion of Sicily and of the Italian mainland, did

not silence the Soviet demand for the Second Front. To Russians the test was, how many enemy divisions had to be sent from the Eastern front to the Mediterranean or other theatres? Judged by that test, 1943 seemed little, if any, better than 1942. By far the greater part of Germany's armed strength was still concentrated on the Eastern front; and if the Red Army proved able, this year, to turn the tables on the adversary, driving him back hundreds of miles from the Volga to the Dnieper, Russian prowess must be given the credit rather than German weakness. Insufficient allowance may have been made by Soviet reckoning for the practical difficulties of an invasion in the West, and the actual contribution made by Anglo-American efforts directly or indirectly to the common cause may have been underestimated. The fact remained that, rightly or wrongly, Russians had a grievance against Britain and America. They were not unaware of the damage inflicted on Germany by air bombardment from the West, nor ungrateful for the help given to them by their allies in the form of supplies and weapons. But all that weighed light in the balance against the blood poured out by mutilated Russia. Whatever sacrifices might be made by British and Americans in the future would scarcely be enough to pay their debt.

Soviet displeasure manifested itself in various hints that, if her allies were not prepared to assume their due share of the burden of fighting Hitler, then Russia would go her own way without too much regard for Anglo-Saxon views or susceptibilities. In return, Russian persistence in dwelling upon the delicate subject of the Second Front and the methods of pressure employed by Moscow and its friends abroad produced some irritation in Anglo-Saxon minds, in spite of popular enthusiasm for Soviet achievements. A degree of alarm also began to be shown at what appeared to be a growing lack of co-ordination, military and political, between the British and American governments on the one side and the Soviet government on the other. These differences were not fundamental. The three partners had far too much to lose for serious quarrelling. The very prominence of the Second Front issue was evidence of the value set by Russians on Anglo-American assistance. Because they wanted, and thought they were entitled to, more, they were inclined to minimize what they got; but they knew very well its importance to them. Besides, though by no means dead, the question naturally lost in urgency by the failure of the Germans in the summer of 1943 to repeat their victories of the previous two summers. It was not now a matter of saving Russia from destruction but of expelling the invaders and finishing the war as soon as possible. Moreover, Mediterranean events could not but impress Russians. As well as making plain, what had before been less than clear, that the British and Americans could fight efficiently on land as well as on sea and in the air, they made it imperative for the Soviet government to draw closer without delay to London and Washington, in order that Soviet interests should not be overlooked in determining the fate of Italy. And perhaps of more than Italy, for the Italian collapse offered wide opportunities of gaining access to Hitler's European fortress.

The hopes entertained by Germans of dividing their enemies were thus doomed to frustration. Italy's capitulation was followed by the Moscow Conference of British, American and Soviet Foreign Ministers, the success of which gave proof of a greater capacity for co-operation on the part of the three Powers than had seemed likely a year, or six months, earlier. The declarations of the Moscow Conference went beyond the non-committal statements published so far by the United Nations, and some machinery was set up in order to translate promise into performance. With the Churchill-Roosevelt-Stalin meeting at Teheran towards the end of the year, optimism reached a high point. A noticeable increase of cordiality in Soviet references to the Anglo-Saxon Powers showed itself and a corresponding sense of relief found expression in Britain and the United States. It appeared that disquiet about Russian good faith and intentions was unfounded, and that a real union of hearts and minds between the leaders of the three great nations had been established.

Were these optimistic sentiments exaggerated? Moscow and Teheran demonstrated beyond doubt that the three Powers regarded united action on the military and political planes in the struggle against Nazi Germany as a paramount necessity; and that they were conscious of their joint responsibility for the post-war reconstruction of Europe and the world, as its three most powerful states. There was satisfactory evidence, too, of agreement on general principles of international order. But it soon became obvious that neither distrust nor divergence of aim had been entirely removed. How could they be, considering the mournful course of Anglo-Russian, and the only rather more happy history of Russo-American, relations up to 1941? Even between British and Americans, with so much in common, all did not go smoothly. Mutual understanding and confidence between British and Russians ran inevitably on a much lower level, not merely because ties of blood, language and tradition were lacking, but also on account of the gulf separating capitalist democracy from Communist dictatorship. The psychological distance between England and Russia remained enormous, in spite of the potent factors, practical and emotional, tending to reduce and hide it.

If the political questions settled by the three-Power conferences at the end of 1943 were comparatively few beside those that remained over, one reason was that the battle had not yet been won; and what the circumstances of its ending would be nobody could say. Then there is always a temptation for allies at war to shelve awkward problems until they cannot be postponed longer rather than allow their attention to be distracted and their friendship disturbed. The consequence has invariably been that grave conflicts arise at the peace conference, straining the alliance and prejudicing the post-war settlement. The earlier detailed agreement can be attained the better, since the comradeship of war is sure to give way, the moment danger is past, to a reaction in which every ground of dissension is magnified. Whatever the causes might be, in the matter of practical details as opposed to general prin-



ciples, evidence of Anglo-American-Soviet unity appeared less convincing, a fact that German propaganda did not overlook.

There was, for example, the vital issue of Soviet Russia's relations with her western neighbours and the Balkan states, above all with Poland. Failure of the great Powers to agree about the future of Poland had nearly wrecked the Congress of Vienna. Again, at Paris in 1919 the Polish question proved difficult, and would have been more so but for Russia's absence. This time Poland could not but take a central place. On the one hand, it was to defend Poland that Britain went to war with Germany, and it would be impossible for the British to disinterest themselves in that country. On the other hand, the Russians were bound to demand a preponderant share in deciding Poland's fate and to have the means of enforcing their demand. There were two purposes which they could not be expected to abandon: first, that the White Russian and Ukrainian territories under Polish rule until the Russo-German treaty of 1939 should be permanently incorporated in the U.S.S.R.; the second, that the government of post-war Poland should be in the hands of men able to recognize the necessity of being on good terms with Soviet Russia. The obstinacy of the Poles in resisting these demands, which might be described as hard but not extortionate, had since early in 1943 caused much embarrassment to the British government; and did not cease to after Moscow and Teheran. Yet the Polish question, prominent though it might seem, was unlikely in the long run to be a major ground of Anglo-Soviet friction. Poland was a country of small direct concern to Britain, whereas the advantage of a well-disposed Russia, behind favourable frontiers, to guard against the peril of a third German attempt to conquer Europe appeared overwhelming. By endorsing in good time the Russian claim to the Curzon Line the British government did much to reduce the proportions of the problem. There were, perhaps, other regions and other issues more capable of producing trouble, if trouble there should be.

Down to, and even after, the end of the war against Germany, the Polish question continued, leaving aside military affairs, to be the principal source of controversy between Russia and her allies. Soviet treatment of the Poles was a constant subject of complaint by British and Americans, and the existence and activities of the Polish Government in London were a continual annoyance, and probably anxiety, to Russians. For more than a year after the Teheran Conference no progress towards settlement could be made. When at last agreement was reached by the Big Three, at the Crimea Conference early in 1945, difficulties still persisted. Not until Britain and America recognized the new provisional government of Poland, thus finally accepting Russian demands and throwing over the London Poles, did the Polish issue recede. Or, rather, it became one aspect only of the general issue raised by Russian predominance in eastern Europe.

Poland might not be the sole cause of a certain cooling down of the warm feelings towards Soviet Russia of the British people, feelings whose fervour perhaps culminated about the period of the battle for Stalin-

grad and had begun to decline even before Teheran. But it was an important cause, for Poland had influential friends and passionate advocates, and a widespread belief existed among British and Americans that the Poles deserved better than the rough handling they were getting from their liberators. This belief found forcible expression in the debate in the House of Commons on the Crimea Conference. Some of those who allowed that the Soviet claims were reasonable regretted that they should be imposed on unlucky Poland in such a way, while others felt uneasy about the undefined but great extensions of territory that Poland was promised as compensation at Germany's expense. If Poland had no sound title to the lands inhabited by White Russians and Ukrainians in the east, why should she be compensated for losing them by receiving accessions in the north and west? Embarrassing questions of that sort betrayed a suspicion that the Polish agreement was one in which equity and respect for the rights of weak nations played no part, and that the principles of the Atlantic Charter, which Britain and the United States had proclaimed and Russia had accepted, were being completely overridden now that they were no longer useful. None of the Big Three could escape responsibility for this return to power politics, but it was Russia that forced the pace.

If, however, Anglo-Saxon sympathy for Soviet Russia diminished in the year after Teheran, the reverse was not true. An obvious reason why the Russians should become better disposed towards their allies existed in the opening of the Second Front, so long and so impatiently awaited, which led, together with the Soviet assault, to calamity after calamity for Germany in the course of that decisive year. Less obviously, Anglo-American acquiescence in Russia's demand for the Curzon Line had no doubt a considerable influence. Thus Stalin in his customary speech on the 27th anniversary of the Revolution handsomely acknowledged the help given to the Red Army by landing operations "which in their scope and organizing ability had no precedent in history." The alliance of the three Powers, he said, had been consolidated by events since Teheran, and all German efforts to sow discord between them had been and would be futile. On the side of the British Government, whatever the state of popular sympathy, there was no lack of appreciation of the importance of Russian friendship. About the same time as Stalin's speech just referred to Churchill declared in Parliament that relations with the Soviet Union had never been more close and cordial. The agreements made at Yalta, in the Crimea, a few months later showed a distinct advance on the results of earlier three-Power meetings, both because they were more precise and comprehensive and because they settled problems, in particular the Polish, which had previously been insoluble.

The war against Germany had now reached its ultimate stage, and as a natural consequence the belligerents devoted a larger part than before of their attention to post-war politics. Allied rivalries, hitherto dormant, began to awake. As their armies drew nearer together physically the cleavage between the Anglo-Saxon democracies and the

Soviet dictatorship became more evident, if not more real. At last the victors from the east and from the west met, splitting Germany in two and compelling her to give up the struggle. They met, but they did not join hands. Contact between Anglo-American forces on the one hand and Russian on the other was slight and superficial. The Russians seemed bent on erecting an impenetrable wall between the territories occupied by them and the remainder of Europe. Behind it the West knew very little of what was going on, and therefore imagined all sorts of things that had no foundation in fact. What was certain was, first, that the Russians were reserved, suspicious and not disposed to suffer interference of any kind from outside; and, secondly, that they were pursuing policies, in Germany and elsewhere, that failed to coincide over an increasingly wide field with Anglo-American.

Far more important than any specific divergence of opinion, like that over methods of voting in the projected Security Council during the San Francisco discussions of the United Nations Charter, seemed the growing lack of confidence between the Soviet Union and the other two major Powers. To the latter Russian methods were disconcerting and Russian aims, from their obscurity, alarming. The three Powers had reaffirmed at the Crimea Conference their determination to maintain their unity of purpose and action up to and after victory, an undertaking which they regarded as a "sacred obligation" owed to their own peoples and to the world. They had promised to take "in harmony" such measures as might be necessary in Germany for the future peace and safety of mankind. But from the beginning there was little sign of real unity or harmony in their dealings with conquered Germany or liberated Europe. The Russians, having overrun as much country as they could, appeared determined to exploit their position by every possible means from the point of view of Russian security and profit, before the Western Powers could obstruct them. They, or governments under Communist influence set up by them, drove out German populations from Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, and stripped Germany and Austria bare of machinery, cattle, stocks of clothing, fuel, household furniture and all kinds of movable property, even dismantling and packing up whole factories for dispatch eastwards. Thus the British troops of occupation, taking over their sector of Berlin, which they were able to do two months only after the German surrender, found that nearly all the industrial plant and raw materials that had survived destruction during the war had been removed by the Russians before their arrival.

When the leaders of the three Powers met at Potsdam the Russians, it might seem, had already secured sufficient of their objectives to make them willing to talk about co-operation with their allies. And it might also, perhaps, seem that the principal result of the Potsdam Conference was to give British and American approval to Soviet activities like the wholesale removal of property from Germany on account of reparations, and to Soviet demands like the claim to incorporate Königsberg in the U.S.S.R. or push Poland's frontier to the Oder, without committing

Moscow in return to more than the vague general principles of collaboration with the Western Powers.

The conclusion of the Potsdam Conference preceded by a day or two the dropping of the first atomic bomb by an American aircraft on the Japanese town of Hiroshima. The immediate effect of the bomb was to precipitate the downfall of Japan, which would have occurred in any case within a short time; but not before Moscow, having carefully awaited the psychological moment to strike, was able to intervene in the Far Eastern war and invade Manchuria. The two great enemies of the United Nations were now prostrate and the armed might of the three Powers stood everywhere triumphant. Complete victory, however, did not make them any more united and harmonious. On the contrary, their disagreements and reciprocal complaints, which had had to be suppressed or minimized in the past from military considerations, grew louder and sharper. Public opinion in Britain and America, where exasperation with their ally had been increasing for months, broke out in bitter attacks on Russia. Soviet troops were accused of every kind of misbehaviour in the occupied countries, Soviet commanders of brutal inhumanity towards vanquished enemies, the Soviet government of virtually annexing the small nations of Eastern Europe, of forcing unrepresentative governments and exclusive trade treaties upon them, under conditions of sinister secrecy and in violation of its engagements, of harbouring all kinds of schemes of aggrandisement in Europe and Asia at the expense of neighbouring countries.

Soviet policy might reasonably be criticized in some respects as ruthless and self-regarding, but these charges were palpably exaggerated and unfair. To speak of the Russians annexing Czechoslovakia or Hungary was as absurd as it would have been to accuse the British of annexing Belgium or Greece. The plight of the German populations expelled from East Prussia or the Sudetenland was pitiable, but so was that of the Poles and Ukrainians massacred or driven from their homes by the Germans when they were masters of Europe. And the one case inevitably resulted from the other. Russians are sensitive to criticism, and attacks on them were sure to provoke retaliation. Besides, they on their side had subjects for complaint. The British and Americans were behaving far too tenderly towards those reactionary elements that had supported Hitlerism in Germany, and even favouring Nazi suspects. Were they not aiming once more at the reconstruction of a strong Germany, friendly to them, so as to counterbalance Russian influence on the Continent? Last time, after the war of 1914-1918, it had been France that they had opposed; now it was the Soviet Union, for the same reasons and with the same idealistic professions. By trying to postpone the redrawing of Germany's eastern frontiers, and to hinder the painful but necessary operation of shifting German populations back into Germany and the removal of German industrial equipment, they were setting themselves against the just claims of those who had borne the burden of German aggression and suffered the bulk of the human and material losses caused by the common enemy. Moreover,

they were preventing an enduring settlement that would make future aggression impossible, contrary to the interest of everybody, including themselves. Soviet Russia had refrained, and was refraining, from interference with British and American plans in western and southern Europe, however distasteful they might sometimes be to Russians. Why then should the Anglo-Saxon Powers stir up trouble in countries under Russian occupation like Roumania, Bulgaria and Hungary, on the pretext that the governments of these countries were not democratic? Did they intend one day to use the same argument in order to justify intervention in the Soviet Union? In any case, it did not lie in their mouths to talk about totalitarian systems in eastern Europe after their treatment of democrats in Greece and their toleration of Fascism in Spain and Portugal. It was not only in Europe that Soviet Russia came up against Anglo-American opposition. In the Far East the Americans were attempting to establish an exclusive sphere of interest in China and to oust all other nations from taking part in the control of defeated Japan.

There was the question, again, of the atomic bomb. It is to a great extent fear that is responsible for ill-feeling between states, and Russian suspiciousness toward the Western Powers was largely due to fear, not so much of an early onslaught by them on the Soviet Union, but that they would be able to isolate Russia by diplomatic means. Making use of their overwhelming financial and economic power and their control of public opinion throughout the world, they could mobilize a vast coalition against the Soviet Union, which felt conscious of having few friends, whenever they desired to impose their will on their ally. The possession of such a terrifying weapon as the atomic bomb by these Powers was calculated to multiply Russian apprehensions and so to increase Russian reserve and suspicion. And the fact that President Truman announced at first his government's intention of keeping the secret to the Anglo-Saxons, an attitude only partially modified later, made a bad impression, for how could this be interpreted except as a public manifestation of lack of confidence in Russia?

By the time of the opening meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the five principal Powers instituted by the Potsdam Conference, a considerable worsening of relations between the Big Three coincided with the initial symptoms of post-war reaction. Thus the London meeting was a failure almost before it started, and the intransigent mood of both sides was reflected in the recriminations that accompanied its termination. Relations deteriorated still further during the following months, and before the end of the year, aggravated by a new crisis over Russian relations with Persia, matters had reached a stage that could only be regarded as disquieting. Yet this very fact was sure to bring about an improvement before long, since, however divided they might be, the three major Powers were all conscious, Russia at least as much as the other two, of the disastrous consequences of an irreparable breach between them. The real danger appeared less of a clash between the Soviet Union on the one hand and the Western Powers on the other in any

near future, than of disagreement and misunderstanding becoming chronic. It seemed only too possible that history might take the same course as after 1815, that is to say a gradual widening and deepening of the gulf between Russia and West until mutual hostility became a tradition too strong to eradicate, and sooner or later bound to find outlet in an explosion. But it would take time for this to happen and meanwhile remedies could be applied.

Some relaxation at least of tension came with the Christmas three-Power conference at Moscow, inasmuch as the direct cause of failure at the September meeting in London—namely, a dispute over the procedure to be followed in making peace treaties with the enemy Balkan states, was removed. Moreover a comprehensive agreement on the Far East was reached, giving Soviet Russia a share in an Allied Control Council for Japan, while Moscow consented to Anglo-American proposals for dealing with the atomic bomb. These results, which brought the year of victory to an end in an atmosphere of general relief, if not optimism, represented a compromise covering a part of the matters at issue between the Anglo-Saxon Powers and Russia. Only a part, for no decisions were made on other questions, those relating to the Middle East in particular. Thus the effect was to restore the situation that existed at the conclusion of the Potsdam Conference, but hardly to improve it.

The success of the Moscow Conference, in contrast to the London failure, seemed to show the truth of the Russian contention that meetings confined to the Big Three were still indispensable after the war, as they had been during it. Possibly the reason why the Russians preferred discussions on a three-Power, rather than a four- or five-Power, basis was that it is less awkward to be in a minority of two to one than of three or four to one. But it needed only common sense to see that the fewer the performers the smaller the chance of discord. If an appeal to experience were required then the history of four-power control of Germany, so greatly hampered by French recalcitrance, constituted a sufficient example. Lesser victors might resent the dictatorship of the Big Three, but in order to avoid anarchy the closest co-operation between the major Powers was clearly necessary and would probably continue to be for a considerable time. Almost any sacrifice appeared justified to maintain their alliance; certainly the sacrifice of somewhat fly-blown conceptions about the sovereign equality of states.

## § 2. *The prospects of the Anglo-Soviet Alliance*

The only certainty about the future of international relations is that matters are going to be quite different from what we imagine. Nevertheless, there are some solid factors and reliable trends that it is worth while distinguishing. We may foresee that in the Europe of tomorrow Soviet Russia will occupy a position analogous to that held by Tsarist Russia after the fall of Napoleon, but of greater ascendancy, since the empire of Alexander I was less formidable in itself and also had serious

rivals on the Continent. No Continental Power now or for a long time can challenge Russia. Britain is likely, on the other hand, to be relatively much weaker than in the years following Waterloo, when she held a position comparable to that of the United States at the present day. The factor of power must have an influence of the first order on the policies of Britain and the Soviet Union towards the rest of Europe and each other. It would, for example, be difficult for a British government, even should it so desire, to attempt to keep Russia in check in eastern Europe by supporting other Continental states against her after the fashion of Castlereagh, for there will be no state in Europe strong enough for the purpose. And it is very doubtful how far the Americans, with their traditional aversion from European entanglements, will consent to interfere on the British side in that region. Consequently, we can only irritate the Russians, without doing any good to anyone, by trying to thwart their plans in the countries to the east and south-east of Germany. On the other hand, the absence of any Continental rival to Russia will make it the more necessary to remain on good terms with her until the possibility of renewed aggression by Germany has completely vanished. In these circumstances compelling reasons exist why Britain should seek the co-operation of the Soviet Union after, as in the course of, the war against Hitler. What may be more open to question is whether the Soviet Union will consider itself equally obliged towards Britain. Russians, too, will want to take precautions against the German danger, but they may not attach the same weight to British assistance as the British to Russian.

It is idle to deny that there are uneasy feelings in this country that Russia may become and, indeed, already is, too powerful. Even those who genuinely desire good relations with Russia are apt to entertain these feelings, nor are they inconsistent with the perception that a powerful state in eastern Europe, which can only be the Soviet Union, is a necessity for European peace and British safety. Without doubt, the pact with Hitler and the measures adopted by Russia against Poland and other countries in 1939 and 1940 are calculated to arouse apprehension. So also some more recent manifestations of Soviet policy. If Russia is determined to retain the Baltic states and the Polish, Roumanian and Finnish territories conquered by her in 1939 and 1940, not to mention the acquisition of a slice of East Prussia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, why should she stop there? May not the new frontiers of the Soviet Union be regarded merely as a stage on the way to other advances in northern and central Europe and the Balkans, or even wider conquests? Then, indeed, Europe would have escaped from the German frying-pan in order to fall into the Russian fire.

Belligerent states are accustomed to make too many protestations of disinterestedness to carry conviction. It can be guessed that, in the event of victory, they will not renounce all its advantages. Yet there is no need to imagine that they will resort to the crudest and most flagrant violations of their promises. Like Britain and the United States, Russia has pledged herself to the liberation of the countries enslaved by Hitler

and undertaken to respect the independence of her neighbours in the future. It is a counsel of despair to believe that the pledge has been given in bad faith, or that Stalin or his colleagues harbour secret and extensive schemes of territorial ambition. The record of Soviet Russia in the past is that of a country absorbed in its own affairs and essentially defensive, not aggressive, in its outlook towards the remainder of the world. There is no good reason for supposing that this outlook has changed, or will change. The Soviet living-space is so great in extent that the desire to expand for the sake of expansion cannot count, and the arguments that lead Moscow to insist on keeping the gains of 1939-1940, primarily strategic and in the second place, economic, historical and ethnological, do not invite an advance further west. It would be more likely to weaken than to strengthen the Soviet Union. Although the new Soviet frontiers will not extend quite so far as those of Tsarist Russia, they are really more advantageous both from a military and a racial point of view. In particular the inclusion of the eastern part of the former Austrian province of Galicia with its Ukrainian population, bringing Soviet territory to the Carpathians, more than makes up for the renunciation of what used to be Russian Poland under the Tsars. The demand to recover lost territories, incorporate White Russians and Ukrainians in the U.S.S.R. and secure control of the Baltic shores and of the Black Sea coast up to the mouth of the Danube has nothing unreasonable in it. It would be much more surprising, not to say an act of extraordinary and unprecedented altruism, if Russia agreed to withdraw voluntarily to the frontiers of 1921-1939. Nor would Europe in general, and Britain especially, have reason to rejoice.

Having returned to her old place in Europe, Russia must be expected to play something like her old part. For the policy of every nation is largely determined by its power, its geographical position and its history. Although the Revolution broke the continuity of Russian foreign policy and introduced new streams of influence, some temporary and some permanent, there is an unmistakable resemblance between many of the aims and methods of Tsarist and Communist statesmen. It is easy, for instance, to recognize the Franco-Soviet Pact of 1935 as the offspring of the Dual Alliance of the eighteen-nineties. The main concern of the Tsars during the nineteenth century was with south-eastern rather than northern or central Europe. Probably Soviet Russia also will turn much of her attention to Balkan questions. Not that there is better ground for believing in Soviet designs of expansion southwards across the Danube than westwards beyond the Polish Bug. Yet it is natural that the Soviet Union should claim to exercise in Roumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, as in Poland and Czechoslovakia, something more than an equal authority with any other great Power.

Friendship with republican Turkey was for many years securely established as a principle of Soviet foreign policy, from the time when Kemal was given help against the Greeks in his country's darkest hour. But after 1939, and especially after the treaty concluded by Turkey with Germany only a day or two before the German invasion of Soviet Russia, relations



between Ankara and Moscow deteriorated. The Turks are afraid, now that Russia is predominant in eastern Europe, that their country's independence may be exposed to the same danger as in Tsarist days. The Russians, on the other hand, are dissatisfied with Turkey's equivocal attitude during the war and with the existing Straits Convention. Diplomatic pressure had already, early in 1945, been brought to bear to persuade the Turks to agree to a revision of the Convention, which is in fact out of date in several respects, as well as to certain other Soviet demands. From the British point of view it is not a revision of the Convention in Russia's favour that causes concern so much as uncertainty about the ultimate aims of Soviet policy in the matter of the Straits, aggravated by the manner in which the Soviet government has sought to settle the question directly with Turkey and without consulting the other signatories of the Convention. In the altered strategic conditions of today the right to control passage through the Straits implies more than control of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. By holding Crete and the Dodecanese, for example, and thus establishing local air superiority over the Aegean Sea, Germany could for three years stop any intercourse between Russia and her allies by way of the Black Sea. May Russia, therefore, not now attempt to secure bases and airfields so as to prevent any future enemy doing what the Germans were able to do? And if so, would it not mean an advance to the Aegean, or even beyond, bringing Russian power dangerously close to British lines of communication in the Mediterranean region? How sensitive Britain is to any prospect of Russian penetration into the Mediterranean was shown by the outburst of alarm caused in this country when Molotov hinted that the Soviet Union would like to be appointed "trustee" for the former Italian colony of Tripolitania.

A threat by Soviet Russia to the independence of one of the small European states would be regarded with antagonism in London. But the British reaction to any threat to a Mediterranean or Middle Eastern state would, as the cases of Persia and Turkey have recently suggested, no doubt be stronger. For the independence of Greece or Turkey, Iraq or Persia, is a British interest, so at least the British public is accustomed to suppose, to a far greater extent than that of Poland, Hungary or Bulgaria. Possibly it is in the Middle East, where the two Powers approach each other closest, that the chief danger of dissension between them will arise, as happened during the nineteenth century. Apart from the strategic importance of the Middle East, there is the question of the oilfields of that region, a new development in the last fifty years, to complicate matters. On the other hand, it appears to the advantage of both the great Powers to preserve a number of buffer states there and adopt a common line of conduct towards these small nations, if we assume that neither aims at destroying or absorbing them. The key to the Middle East is to be found not in Ankara and Teheran but in London and Moscow. Only in so far as the two Powers are on bad terms generally can Middle Eastern questions become a source of acute conflict. In themselves they are minor.

Here, as in Europe, it would be an error, and a serious error, to imagine that nineteenth-century conditions are simply going to reproduce themselves. The ratio of strength has fundamentally changed : Britain is relatively less and Russia relatively more powerful. We should not therefore too readily imagine that Russia can be bottled up in the Black Sea, as she has been hitherto, and excluded from the Mediterranean. Russians feel that the time has passed for Britain to look on that sea as a British lake. And what they think about the Mediterranean today they may think about the Persian Gulf tomorrow. Is there any sound reason for opposition on our part to a Soviet Russian claim for bases on the Straits, or beyond them, supposing the claim were made ? Only if we believe that it is a British interest to block Russia's path in every direction that we are able. Such an attitude would be totally inconsistent with the effective maintenance of the Anglo-Soviet alliance, which requires both nations to cease acting on the constant assumption that a loss for one is necessarily a gain for the other. We do not demur to American demands for strategic bases in the Caribbean or the Pacific. Why then to Russian demands in, it may be, the Mediterranean or the Baltic ? If we intend the Anglo-Soviet alliance to be a reality we should rather welcome anything that increases the security of our ally. The safety of the world depends on the strengthening, not the weakening, of the major Powers. We should do well to consider very carefully what issues are of vital concern to us, in the Middle East particularly, after the second World War, and not to forget Mackenzie Wallace's warning to our ancestors against mistaking imaginary for real interests or fighting about a misunderstanding. Must Russia give proof of her peaceful intentions before we can trust her ? That is to argue in a vicious circle. She cannot be expected to give proof of peaceful intentions before other nations do the same. Mutual trust implies guarantees of good behaviour by both sides, not by one only. It may be silly of the Russians to suspect the sincerity of British and American utterances, but the inescapable fact is that they do, and we are unwise if we assume that their suspicion is not genuine.

Anglo-Russian enmity in Asia has above all been a question, from the British point of view, of the security of India ; nervousness about Russian schemes did not cease with the Revolution though altered in character. Communism, indeed, had only a small attraction for Indians, and the Indian struggle for independence in the years after the first World War owed much less than the Turkish, Persian or Chinese to Moscow. Yet a potential Russian threat still existed and even increased as the military power of the Soviet Union grew, at least until the time when Soviet Russia joined the League of Nations. There is no sign at present of any dispute between the two nations over India. Since peace and order in Asia must be beneficial to Russians equally with British they both have motives for wanting to see a solution of the Indian problem that will avoid anarchy and preserve the unity of the country. The prospect of "Pakistan", a great Moslem state in northern India, which might include Afghanistan and would inevitably produce repercussions among the

Moslems of the U.S.S.R., cannot be expected to appeal to the Soviet government.

The Anglo-Soviet alliance of 1942 was restricted in scope to Europe, since the Soviet Union remained at peace with Japan and would not compromise her careful neutrality in the Far Eastern War. British and Americans wisely refrained from answering Russian demands for a second front in the West by calling upon the Soviet government to open a second front against the Japanese. It would have been too much to expect the Russians to take on another adversary when they were engaged in such a mortal struggle with Germany. In effect, however, Russia was a sleeping partner of the Anglo-American combination in the Far East. By compelling Japan to keep large forces in Manchuria she afforded valuable aid to the Chinese and their allies. It was the Japanese menace that ended the estrangement between the Soviet Union and the United States, as well as contributing to bridge the Anglo-Soviet gulf and helping to bring the U.S.S.R. into the League of Nations. American disapproval of Communism, in theory and practice, and not any conflict of material aims had kept the U.S.A. and Russia apart, two nations that have never in their history been enemies and have long shared a deep distrust of Japan. Next to the Monroe Doctrine, concern for Chinese integrity and independence may be said to be the principal tenet of American foreign policy, and China's friends are the friends of the United States. Not only was the U.S.A. the most reluctant of the Allied Powers to intervene against the Communists at the Revolution, but it was mainly owing to American pressure that the Japanese were at length induced to withdraw their troops from Russian territory after the Civil War. All this had made Moscow from the beginning anxious, if possible, to be on good terms with Washington, particularly over Far Eastern questions.

In spite of Russian non-participation until the very latest moment in the Pacific War there could never be any doubt of the Soviet desire to see Japan defeated, driven from China, particularly Manchuria, and deprived of the power to repeat her attempts to dominate eastern Asia. It will be difficult, if not impossible, in the long run to prevent a renewal of Japanese aggression unless a stable China can be erected to preserve the balance of power in the Far East. The Anglo-Saxon Powers and Soviet Russia have, therefore, a common interest in ensuring that such a China is given a fair chance to arise. Whether the Chinese, having got their opportunity, will be able to use it remains to be seen. For it is hard to overestimate the task that confronts the Chungking government now that the foreign invader has been expelled. To speak of China as a world Power on an equality with Britain, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., is to anticipate a distant future. The leadership in the Far East must be assumed by the three last named until a strong China emerges, should that ever happen. Of the three, the United States and the Soviet Union are likely to exert more influence than Britain because of their superior power in the northern Pacific region; and we can expect, assuming close ties to exist between the British Empire and the United

States, that Anglo-Russian relations in the Far East will depend to a large extent on Russo-American.

The Soviet Union has shown that it considers itself, in the Far East as well as in Europe, to be the heir of Tsarist Russia. A rich profit was made by the last-moment intervention in the war against Japan, though, in view of the burden Russians sustained in the West, no one can justly complain of that. By the annexation of the southern half of the island of Sakhalin and the Kuriles the outer defences of their Far Eastern territory are strengthened. And these acquisitions, together with the treaty with China providing for joint Soviet-Chinese ownership of the main Manchurian railways, for a Soviet naval base at Port Arthur and commercial privileges at the adjacent harbour of Dalny, put Russia back in the position she occupied before her defeat in the Russo-Japanese war forty years ago. This does not mean that Moscow will take up again the ambitious Chinese schemes pursued by St. Petersburg at the beginning of the century. Circumstances are widely different from then, not least because Peking is no longer the capital of China, and Port Arthur accordingly does not possess the same strategic significance as formerly. It will scarcely be surprising if the rights acquired by the Soviet Union in Manchuria lead to a good deal of friction between the Soviet and Chinese governments in the future. Yet the Russo-Chinese treaty has the appearance of an historic event, for the Chinese have obtained an explicit acknowledgment by Russia of Chinese sovereignty in Manchuria, and also an explicit recognition of the authority of the central government of Chungking over all China, including Manchuria. Moscow, that is to say, has repudiated the policy that led to the breach with Chiang Kai-Shek in 1927 and disavowed the Chinese Communists hostile to Chungking, as it has disavowed the Communists in the West. Perhaps the world will continue to be sceptical of Russian professions until time has shown their value. But Anglo-American opposition to Soviet influence in the Far East is not the best way to prove that scepticism erroneous.

We must remember that, while the power of the Soviet Union inspires some trepidation in this country, the feeling is mutual. In the past Russians, Tsarist or Communist, have had much more justifiable grounds for fearing Britain than the British for fearing Russia. We invaded their country in the Crimean War and again at the time of the Revolution, but they have never attacked either Great Britain or the British Empire. The position of Soviet Russia will doubtless be relatively stronger in the future and ours relatively weaker ; but the special relationship between Britain and the United States cannot be left out of account. Together the Anglo-Saxon Powers far surpass the Soviet Union in resources and advantages. Is it not possible that Anglo-Saxon superiority may be used for Anglo-Saxon ends ? The liveliness of the Second Front controversy during the war was primarily due to a Russian desire to shift part of their military load on to other shoulders ; yet suspicion certainly existed in Russia that the Anglo-Saxons were deliberately holding back, with the idea of reserving their strength until, after

Germans and Russians were exhausted, they could impose their will on both combatants. However unwarranted the suspicion might be, it was no more absurd than ideas frequently expressed in Britain and the United States about the intentions of Soviet Russia.

A number of instances, particularly since the end of the war, in which the Anglo-Saxon Powers combined together to oppose Soviet plans have increased Russian suspicion, while the atomic bomb has, of course, added considerably to Russian fear of them; the longer the secret of its manufacture is withheld the more difficult to eradicate this fear and the ill-feeling to which it gives rise. It may be true to say that, had the Russians made the discovery, they would not be eager to share it with their allies: the argument is not helpful. Is the possession of such an invidious secret worth the drawbacks? The short-term advantage it affords to the United States and Britain is great. But new technical inventions have always given only a temporary lead to one country over another. Sooner or later the secret is disclosed, and things are as they were before, so far as comparative strength is concerned. Anglo-Saxon monopoly of the atomic bomb may not endure for long; while it is, unfortunately, not certain that a watertight system of international control can be discovered. The best insurance, or the most effective in practice, against its use may then lie in the possibility of retaliation. The conclusion can be drawn that this invention tends to increase the power of the largest nations, like the United States or Soviet Russia, relatively to others, including Britain, because such factors as scale of industry and remoteness of centres of population from any potential enemy favour the former.

Of all matters that arise for discussion at the end of a great war territorial questions are sure to be the principal subject of dispute and their decision the condition precedent to a restoration of peace. This is not to be wondered at, seeing that mankind is, whether we like it or not, divided into fifty or more sovereign nations whose wealth, power and independence, indeed their very existence, depend on the physical territory occupied by them. The first necessity, accordingly, for the maintenance of good relations between Britain and Russia was, and is, that the two countries should, together with the United States, agree about the territorial alterations that must be made in Europe, Asia and Africa, above all those affecting the Soviet Union, as a result of the second World War. This time, fortunately, in contrast to what happened at the end of the war against Napoleon, the most difficult territorial question, that concerning the frontiers of Poland, was practically settled by the end of the German war, and those that remain are secondary. Whatever may be thought of the solution in the case either of Poland's eastern or western frontier, the fact that the three major Powers were able to reach a solution amicably before the inevitable post-war reaction began was enormously beneficial. We only need to imagine how serious the situation would have been if they had still disagreed on this vital issue six months after Germany surrendered. It was largely due to the early and far-sighted recognition by the British government of

Russia's claim to the Curzon Line that Poland did not add disastrously to the other causes of quarrel between the three Powers on the morrow of their common victory.

The main lines at least of the territorial reorganization of the world consequent on the defeat of Germany and Japan having been decided successfully by the Big Three, it is possible to be moderately hopeful about their other differences. Whether these are concerned with the functions of the United Nations Organization, or the control and administration of Germany, or democracy in the Balkans, or with the Middle or the Far East, they are not, it would appear, of the most dangerous kind. Only if one of the three should feel itself faced with a threat of a sort that does not permit retreat or compromise, is it necessary to fear the worst, although the ultimate prospect for the world is gloomy unless some degree of co-operation between them can be permanently established. The "nuclear alliance" that Walter Lippmann has desiderated as "the irreducible minimum guarantee of the security of each" of the three Powers is not incompatible with rivalry, and even sharp disputes, between them, provided that no fundamental conflict of policies, which it would be premature to discern at present, is allowed to develop. With the history of the League of Nations in mind, it would be rash to assert that the existence of the United Nations Organisation is sufficient to put a stop to international anarchy. It is the United Nations Organisation whose efficacy depends on the "nuclear alliance", and not the other way about. Yet no doubt the institution of the new League, in so far as it both provides machinery for, and encourages the habit of, common action by the great Powers, reinforces other factors that go to maintain and strengthen their alliance.

As in the past, Europe will probably be in the future the main pre-occupation of Soviet diplomacy. It is in the West, in Europe and not in Asia, that by far the larger part of the population and wealth of the country are concentrated. It is from the West, as history shows, that foreign invaders have come to ravage the Russian motherland and subdue the Russian people. The security of Britain also depends on what happens on the European Continent. There is, indeed, no quarter of the globe in which British interests are not liable to be affected by any disturbance. But an enemy dominating the Continent is a very much more menacing prospect than an enemy elsewhere, in the Far East or nearer home. Singapore, though perhaps a bigger, was an infinitely less grave disaster than Dunkirk. This has always been true, but it was obscured by two circumstances until a few years ago: first, by British sea-power, and, secondly, by the existence on the Continent of a number of rival great Powers which balanced one another. Neither of these two circumstances can now be relied on. The insufficiency of our sea-power is too obvious to need arguing, while it seems certain that no single Continental state will be comparable in strength to Soviet Russia for a long time, if ever. Yet the Soviet Union, like Bismarckian Germany, may still be haunted by the nightmare of coalitions. An Anglo-Saxon coalition holds only a distant threat, but a coalition of

Anglo-Saxon with one or more other nations would be a different matter. Hence the consistent and strong opposition shown by Russians to schemes of European federation and to the idea of a so-called "Western bloc". An intimate alliance, or something closer than an ordinary alliance, between Britain and France, backed by the United States, and still more if it drew Germany within its orbit, is an eventuality which they have to contemplate and do not at all like.

The object of Soviet policy, as it appears, is to keep the countries of Europe friendly to her and also disunited. There is no sense in complaining of this policy. It is natural, indeed inevitable; any other nation in Russia's position and with her history would act in the same way. Here, however, a possibility exists of radical conflict between Russian and British purposes. For, if Russia wants a divided Europe, it seems probable that the interests of Britain demand just the opposite. We have to allow for a recurrence of the German danger. Moreover, considering Russian strength on the European Continent, it may be the sole means of preserving that balance of forces which we have always regarded as necessary for our safety, and which in a world of competing sovereign states is both legitimate and indispensable, although open to perilous abuse. The United Nations Organisation, even if more successful than the League of Nations, does not offer a remedy, since it aims, not at superseding national sovereignty, but merely at regulating it. We are just as much entitled to provide for our security as the Russians. The risk that Soviet Russia may one day attack western Europe is small, but no more remote than that Britain and France are going to make war on the Soviet Union. We should not be deterred from pursuing objectives which we believe to be sound because they do not please Russia. On the other hand, it is essential, if a policy aiming at the integration of western, and perhaps central, Europe is adopted, that it should not be inspired by hostility to the Soviet Union. The greatest care must be taken not to offend Soviet susceptibilities; to persuade Russians that in the long run a disunited and chaotic Europe is not to the advantage of any nation, including their own; to refrain from interference with Russia in regions like eastern Europe and the Balkans where Moscow claims a preponderant influence; and to avoid opposition to measures regarded by Russia as necessary for her security, unless we are quite certain that they are injurious to our own.

Whereas in the Far East it appears that Soviet Russia and the United States are bound to play the chief parts, and consequently that British policy towards the former may be determined to a large extent by the latter, the same is not true of Europe. In Europe there seems little doubt that Britain and Russia are destined to be the leading Powers. The Americans are already showing impatience to limit their European commitments, and the fact that their stay is temporary is beginning to have its effect even now on their influence. But Russians and British cannot depart. It is in Europe, then, that Anglo-Russian relations will be of supreme importance, not only to the two peoples but to the world as a whole.

From the beginning of Anglo-Russian relations four hundred years ago, trade has been a tie between the two nations, binding their interests together while chafing from time to time, and often mitigating a mutual hostility engendered by political conflict. The effect on British policy was very evident throughout the eighteenth century and in the time of Napoleon, and, again, after the Russian Revolution. Commercial arguments prompted the pro-Soviet inclinations of Lloyd George and in large part of the two pre-war Labour governments and acted as a brake on the anti-Soviet feelings of Conservatives. They should have a favourable influence in the future also. We may still hope that the clauses providing for economic collaboration in the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of 1942 will not prove fruitless. In Asia alone, particularly the Middle East, where geography gives Russia an obvious advantage, has commercial rivalry seriously disturbed good relations. Soviet, like Tsarist, Russia has not so far exported manufactured goods on a substantial scale, the main articles of export being grain, timber, oil, furs and others that do not compete with British products. Latterly, before the outbreak of war in 1939, Britain was much the best foreign market of the Soviet Union. In the five years preceding the war this country bought annually Soviet goods to the average value of £20 million, and in the last of these years, 1938, exports from the U.S.S.R. to the United Kingdom were three times those sent to the next best customer, Belgium. It is true that Russia purchased much less from, than she sold to, the United Kingdom. Even so, British exports (including re-exports) to the Soviet Union in 1938, though greatly exceeded by American, amounted to twice the value of those from any country other than the U.S.A. Absolutely, however, Anglo-Soviet trade was small in relation to the total of British overseas commerce and the resources and needs of the U.S.S.R. There will obviously be opportunities of a great increase, a matter of the utmost importance to us, considering the pressing need for an expansion of post-war British exports.

It would be a mistake to think that foreign distrust of Communist principles was solely responsible for the economic isolation of the Soviet Union. Of all nations Soviet Russia is the least interested in foreign trade. As a socialist state in a capitalist world, she has deliberately, though with a certain reluctance, reduced economic contacts with other countries to a minimum for the purpose of avoiding industrial and financial dependence upon them. The vast size and natural wealth of the Union make possible a high degree of self-sufficiency, and the Soviet government has not hesitated to make drastic use of the possibility. Apart from mechanical equipment necessary for the development of the U.S.S.R., few commodities were allowed entry before the war and scarcely any motive existed to export more than would provide exchange to pay for the requisite imports. Under a capitalist system the urge to exploit new markets and the lure of profitable investment are constant incentives to export goods and capital, in spite of obstructive tariffs, exchange difficulties and the rest. Nor can the private trader and customer be easily compelled to forego his power to



buy articles from abroad if he chooses. On the other hand, under a collectivist system, like the Russian, only what the state permits will in fact be produced, consumed, imported and exported. If the state decides on a policy of autarky, it can carry it out far more thoroughly than a capitalist government is in a position to do.

In the economic sphere, still more noticeably than in the political, Soviet Russia has displayed, and no doubt will continue to display, a constant reserve towards ideas of international co-operation; partly because of her comparative economic weakness and partly because of her peculiar economic structure. Soviet policy inclines to bilateral methods of approach, and even, in the case of certain countries under the shadow of Russian power, aims apparently at the conclusion of commercial treaties that will seriously restrict these countries from trading with the rest of the world. It is too early to say whether the trend will be permanent, but trade agreements of this sort, besides being detrimental to the material interests of the democracies, are in principle repugnant to them and bound to prove an obstacle in the way of Anglo-Russian friendship. Economically, however, as in other respects, it is necessary to accept as a fact that the Russians are determined to go their own way, that it is useless to try to exert pressure upon them in the hope that they can be made to behave as capitalists think they should, and that the best way of agreeing with them in some things, is not to expect to agree with them in everything.

Perhaps in the future Soviet Russia will not be so intent as before in insulating her economy from that of other countries. A time may come when the task of internal development has proceeded so far, and Soviet production exceeds domestic requirements to such an extent, that a large expansion of foreign trade becomes desirable without risk to the economic independence of the Union. But this is to look a good way ahead. Apart altogether from the loss and damage caused by the German invasion, years will pass before Russia ceases to be comparatively backward materially. Assuming that the Soviet government wishes to obtain, and obtains, credits from abroad on a much greater scale than previously, thus stimulating external commerce, the Russian share in world trade will almost certainly continue to be minor. We may therefore conclude that the economic influence of the Soviet Union in the post-war period is likely to be disproportionate to its political importance. All the same, in some parts of Asia and in eastern Europe, especially the Balkans, it is more than probable that Soviet competition with other countries will be strong. If so, we should welcome rather than deplore the fact. Not only on economic grounds but because of the political implications of autarky, it is desirable that economic intercourse between the Soviet Union and the rest of the world should increase. The political boycott of Soviet Russia from the Revolution to 1934 could scarcely have been maintained without the economic.

Friendship between states, particularly great states, in a competitive and dangerous world is a rarity, and in the case of Britain and Russia there is little cause for surprise, considering the divergence of character

and history between them, that the harmony established in time of war proved temporary. Whether the deterioration that followed the surrender of Japan could have been lessened, if not prevented, by better statesmanship on both sides is another matter. The disagreeable, but undeniable fact is that, within the space of some months, the Anglo-Soviet Treaty seemed reduced to scarcely more than a nominal existence. But we are probably mistaken if we attach too much importance to the era of post-war reaction through which the world is passing, and which may be expected to last five or six years after the end of hostilities. Experience has shown that an almost infallible way of starting a quarrel between nations is for them to be allies in war. The reciprocal recriminations of Messrs. Bevin and Molotov were no sharper than those of Curzon and Poincaré or of Castlereagh and the Emperor Alexander I. We have not this time, at least not yet, entered into an alliance with the United States and Germany to compel Russia to retreat in eastern Europe, as we allied ourselves for that purpose with Austria and France in 1815.

There are a number of reasons why victorious allies should fall to disputing. The crude question of sharing the booty is the most productive but not the only cause of trouble. At the end of a great war circumstances everywhere are precarious and fluid. Now is the time for states with ambitions or fears to seize advantages that would be out of reach in more stable conditions. The conduct of a nation in the abnormal period during which a post-war settlement is being evolved and consolidated is no fair test of its behaviour afterwards. Impressed by the tremendous size and power of the Russian Empire and the alarming schemes of its ruler after Napoleon's fall, men could, and did, make dire prophecies of peril to the safety of Europe that were very wide of the mark. For a few years after 1918 the French used their temporarily complete ascendancy over their hereditary enemies to settle accounts with them in a manner that led to comparisons with Rome's treatment of helpless Carthage, comparisons which seem, in the light of after events, highly fantastic. A successful war leaves the victors, not merely with the power and the will to secure aims the opportunity to attain which may never recur, but also with a taste for violent methods and an unfamiliarity with the patient plans of normal diplomacy. It takes time, also, to substitute a new balance of power for that which has been destroyed. The victors being for a while in a position to do much as they wish, subject to the demands of their allies, tend to overestimate their own strength and to believe that their predominance is permanent instead of only provisional. As soon as they demobilize their forces, withdraw their armies of occupation and return to regular habits of mind, the illusion begins to disappear and they find that their power to order things as they will is very much less than they imagined. At the same time, by way of compensation, their allies too are seen to be less formidable than they appeared. The first discovery has a chastening and the second a reassuring effect. It is possible that the victors in the late war, like their predecessors, will come in the not very distant future to value

their own prospects more moderately and to view each other's proceedings with less apprehension.

It would no doubt be extremely imprudent to assume that the present friction, we might almost say hostility, between Britain and Russia, is merely a passing phase. There are few people in this country whom the prospect does not dismay, as there are also few who do not feel puzzled about the reasons for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. How can the drift apart, so ominously reminiscent of what has occurred more than once before in Anglo-Russian history, be arrested? Unfortunately, it takes two to make a friendship as well as a quarrel, and we cannot be sure whether or not the Russians have concluded that the Anglo-Soviet alliance of 1942 has served its purpose. We should not, however, too readily suppose that Soviet statesmen, whatever view they may take of the benefits of co-operation with Britain, are unappreciative of the dangers of mutual enmity, and especially of the possibility of Britain becoming the centre of an anti-Russian coalition. It is plain that one of the main objects that Soviet diplomacy ought to pursue is to avoid forcing Britain and the United States together in opposition to the third major Power. But that is exactly what an anti-British policy may do and, indeed, has done. On our side, as this very consequence of Soviet policy proves, we are not powerless to prevent matters going from bad to worse. Here we have a cogent argument to persuade Russians of the unwisdom of antagonizing us. It is, of course, the kind of argument that has to be employed with caution. If pressed too hard, and in the wrong way, it would have the reverse of a good result.

Yet a purely negative, and deterrent, approach is not enough. Positive methods of improving our relations with Soviet Russia are also required. We have to persuade Moscow, not only that our antagonism is to be shunned, but that our friendship is to be desired. An increase of Anglo-Soviet trade and economic intercourse is one line of advance. Another way is that we should aim, where possible, at acting in a mediatory capacity between the other two major Powers. We must, quite apart from our relations with Russia, keep on intimate terms with the Americans; but there is no need for us to identify ourselves with them on every occasion and every issue. To do so would entail a subordination of Britain to the United States which would be contrary to our interests and our feelings from many angles, and involve us perhaps in difficulties, for example in the Far East, which we would best keep clear of. In Europe, again, and in the Middle East there is surely room for accommodation, and even collaboration, between Soviet Russia and ourselves. That is not to say that we should give way to Russian demands at all points. Any extension of Soviet influence on our side of the Rhine, in the western Mediterranean, or in the Arabian peninsula, ought doubtless to be resisted, as should any attempt on Russia's part to deprive us of our share in the control of Germany and central Europe in general. Nobody needs to be reminded nowadays of the fatal consequences of a policy of appeasement. Yet it does not follow that willingness to make concessions is always and necessarily a mistake. Otherwise no

compromises would ever be reached. Besides, it is not weakness to recognize the limitations of one's own strength. We would overstrain, and thus diminish, our power by trying to maintain it in regions where geography makes it impossible to compete with Russia on equal terms. All through the nineteenth century we persisted in efforts to oust Russian influence from the Near East, a policy which we can now see was misconceived from the beginning. Let us beware of adopting the same policy again, in circumstances much less favourable. That road leads eventually to another conflict like that of ninety years ago, which might not end this time in the Crimea.

By refraining from policies certain to create ill-will between us and Russia in parts of the world where we cannot easily bring power to bear, we are not really weakening but strengthening ourselves. In the altered circumstances of today we must concentrate our resources and restrict our responsibilities, both so dangerously dispersed and extended, to the utmost of our ability. Britain's status as one of the three greatest Powers can only be maintained if on the one hand we limit our liabilities, and on the other hand we make the fullest use of our peculiar advantages, which consist not so much in the strength of the United Kingdom as in our connections and associations with other countries, with the Dominions, the United States, the democracies of western Europe, and also with the Soviet Union. We cannot afford to do without any of those friends and partners. And they, it may very well be, cannot afford to do without us. Both the Americans and the Russians would have cause for regret if the Big Three were reduced to a Big Two. It is on these considerations that the ultimate justification for the continuance of the Anglo-Soviet alliance rests, in spite of all local and temporary irritations, misunderstandings and disagreements.

### § 3. *Communism versus capitalist democracy*

Suspicion of Soviet Russia in Britain and other countries comes, of course, from fear of Communism as well as of the future foreign policy of the Soviet state. Even if there had been no pact between Stalin and Hitler, no Finnish War and seizure of the Baltic States and Bessarabia, or, again, if the Soviet Union had been willing to return to its frontiers of 1939 and do nothing but what the Anglo-Saxon Powers approved, Communism would yet be an obstacle to understanding. It is futile to suppose that the ideological cleavage will disappear or to underrate the difficulties that it must cause. There is no prospect in the immediate future that the Western democracies will accept the gospel of Marx and Lenin. Still less, if anything, that Communists will be converted to the doctrines of capitalist democracy. The two systems got accustomed to existing side by side before the war, after a fashion. But they barely tolerated one another. More than that will be required if the "nuclear alliance" of the U.S.A., Britain and the U.S.S.R. is to function properly. Although ideological differences may not prevent international collaboration, they inevitably hamper and chill it. To opponents of socialism

the very existence of Soviet Russia must be a standing grievance. For it proves, in a manner impossible to explain away and in a form too blatant to overlook, that material success is not dependent on the principle of private profit. And, more alarming still, have the political and social ideals of the West not been shown by the hard test of battle to be less firmly rooted than the collectivist creed of Moscow? The tenacity of Russian resistance to Hitler's invasion, the fortitude of civilians and soldiers and the energy of the counter-attack can scarcely be ascribed to the racial qualities of the population alone.

Anglo-Russian hostility in the nineteenth century was mainly a consequence of conflicting national policies. But it was beyond question aggravated by ideology. Distaste for Tsarist despotism formed one of the reasons for the constant, and often groundless, distrust that British opinion entertained of Russian good faith. National policy is coloured, if not shaped, by the sentiments of those who direct it. The fact that the ruling class in Victorian England, Whigs and Tories, Conservatives and Liberals, were convinced that British interests were involved in the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and that Russian conquests in central Asia menaced the security of India, flowed to some extent from anti-Russian prejudice. As Lord Salisbury and a few others saw, there was an irrational element in the extreme importance that British statesmen were accustomed to attribute to the question of Constantinople and the Straits. Otherwise, why did they agree so easily to abandon that vital region to Russia in 1915? When the future of Constantinople came to be discussed between the Allies after Turkey's entry into the first World War on the German side, it was the French government and not Grey that offered the firmest opposition to Sazonov's demand. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, again, clearly showed concern over Russian designs on India to have been exaggerated.

It can hardly be expected that aversion from Communism, like abhorrence of Tsarism in the last century, will not have an unfortunate effect on future British relations with Russia. No doubt, the interest in and admiration for Soviet aims and institutions that existed already before the war among a section of the British public have spread far more widely under the influence of Russian achievements in the struggle with Fascist Germany. Even, however, in the Labour movement sympathy for Soviet Russia does not exclude a resolute antagonism to Communism and Communists as such. The temper of British socialism is as irreconcilable with Russian Marxism as was that of British conservatism in the past with the reactionary absolutism of St. Petersburg. A Labour government at Westminster has by no means eliminated Anglo-Soviet friction.

Ideological differences do more than merely arouse academic disapprobation. The lack of a common political system is a greater barrier against mutual understanding than the lack of a common language or ancestry. Parliamentary and absolute governments, nowadays as in the time of Castlereagh and Alexander I, will not therefore easily co-operate over any length of time, though they may act well enough

together for specific and limited purposes. A dictatorship cannot help behaving dictatorially, while a parliamentary democracy is always unreliable : a Grey or a Churchill may be in office today, but tomorrow he may be replaced by a Neville Chamberlain or a Curzon. Whereas British Foreign Secretaries must work under the arc lamps of publicity, with a crowd of questioners and critics continually harassing them, Soviet statesmen are able to pursue long-term objectives in conditions of secrecy and security that give them an obvious advantage, but too often render their policy devious and arbitrary.

Comprehension is made still harder by racial incompatibility. Russians and Englishmen have throughout history found difficulty in sympathising with one another's notions, even when they have tried to be friendly. The Slav and the Anglo-Saxon mentalities seem too far apart. The present rulers of the Soviet Union are none the less Russian by reason of the fact that their politics differ from those of their Tsarist predecessors. We might, indeed, say that they are more Russian, because less well acquainted with foreign countries and influenced to a lesser extent by Western ideas. If we compare Molotov as Foreign Minister with, for instance, Isvolsky, we can have no doubt which is the more cosmopolitan. Marxian and Leninist training, revolutionary experience and decades of isolation from the rest of the world have combined with Muscovite peculiarities of race and history to produce a way of thinking as widely removed from the standards of the West as if contemporary Englishmen and Russians were separated by several centuries in time. How is it possible to come to satisfactory agreements with people who speak a language that is not only incomprehensible but untranslatable ? Ordinary terms seem to have quite a different meaning to them and to us. When a Russian calls his country "democratic", we imagine that he is just misusing words ; and British trades unionists who visit the Soviet Union merely smile when they are told that industrial disputes never occur there, because the interests of labour and management never come into conflict. It is not that we are sane and they mad, only that Russian Communists start from philosophical assumptions about society and the individual that are completely alien to the West, though not necessarily untenable on that account.

Personal intercourse between the two peoples is scarcely likely to amount to much more than in pre-war times, or to have a considerable influence on the relations of their governments. Of far more importance, for good or evil, in deciding what Englishmen and Russians think about each other, will be what writers tell them, above all what newspapers tell them. From the Revolution until Hitler's invasion the British press, generally speaking, did little to promote and much to prevent Anglo-Russian understanding. There has since been a great improvement, which it is to be hoped will be permanent. Soviet censorship, however, is still an obstacle, both in the Soviet Union and in occupied countries. Suffering apparently from the after-effects of the persecution mania that used to beset it, the Soviet government fails to realize how serious are the drawbacks of secretiveness, at any rate in dealing with the Western

democracies. It is a malady, on the other hand, that is not going to be cured any the quicker for the methods and manners of a certain section of British, and American, journalism, always on the look-out for anti-Soviet propaganda. No doubt the great majority of news correspondents are conscientious and responsible. But they are professionally biased against countries that dislike publicity, and, perhaps, are rather too much inclined to take the part of small nations that, whether for good reasons or not, quarrel with great Powers. Moreover, their private sympathies may have to give way to the policy of the newspaper or agency which they represent, and these are usually controlled by persons constitutionally indisposed towards affection for Soviet Communism. If Russia were not Communist, or alternatively if Russia were not so strong, she would be more favourably regarded by the outside world. It is the combination of great strength and an unpopular system of government that makes so many foreigners so jealous.

In itself the existence of a socialist state in one of the greatest of countries is an uncomfortable example to the remainder of the world. But that is not all. The vision of a Bolshevist flood pouring over the boundaries of the Soviet Union, submerging all traditional landmarks, bringing universal chaos, civil war, famine and ruin, has never since the Russian Revolution faded from timid minds; and has been carefully fostered by those who have desired for their own purposes to keep Soviet Russia isolated and friendless. Will Soviet military strength ally itself in the post-war period with Communist propaganda outside the U.S.S.R. to the destruction of national independence and the subversion of social order? This is a nightmare that cannot be banished except by practical proof of its unreality. Moscow, to be sure, short of announcing that Communists no longer believe in Communism, has given every assurance that it is possible to give in the form of general statements of policy as well as by specific measures or undertakings towards individual states, including Britain. In particular, the dissolution of the Comintern, the agent of world revolution and the principal cause of distrust on the part of the democracies, has exposed, in Stalin's own words, "the lie that Soviet Russia intends to intervene in the lives of other nations and force Bolshevism upon them". Nevertheless, there are lies that survive exposure and it would be incorrect to assert that anxiety, however unfounded, has completely disappeared.

A Communist might retort that there is at least as much cause for Soviet Russia to fear the capitalist Powers as Britain or the United States Communism. The two worlds remain divided as before. For how long? In the end either capitalism or Communism must succumb. The fact that British and Americans came to make common cause with the Soviet Union against the Fascist proves merely that they considered Germany and Japan to be the more immediate danger. True, the teeth of the capitalist wolf have become blunt, or so he pretends, while the Communist lamb has grown into a lusty animal with formidable horns, well able to take care of himself. But the wolf's nature has not changed, and he will make up in cunning for what he has lost in vigour. Even

though numerous individuals in Britain and America may be well disposed to their Russian ally, the ruling class in those countries will never, and can never, abandon its resolve to crush the Soviet state by some means or other. If not, the Soviet example will ultimately ensure its own downfall and liquidation. Were the destinies of nations really decided by syllogisms this sort of reasoning might be hard to refute. Fortunately, logical dilemmas are only irresistible on paper. Capitalist democracy and Communist dictatorship may continue for a considerable time to regard one another with misgiving and co-operate with difficulty. They are not bound to fly at each other's throats because some theorist tells them they ought.

The desire to proselytize is common to all revolutions, and the democratic ideas of 1789 were just as explosive as the Communist ideas of 1917. After a few years of apostolic fervour, Frenchmen lost their urge to propagate liberty and equality abroad. Communist missionary zeal, too, was comparatively short-lived. If the Comintern survived until as recently as 1943 it was only on condition of a complete alteration in its character. Instead of engineering universal upheaval, it became an instrument by which Moscow attempted to build up an anti-Fascist alliance between Soviet Russia and the democracies. When that aim, thanks to Hitler, had been accomplished, the Comintern was killed by a stroke of Stalin's pen. It had no more reason for existence and, indeed, stood in the way of good relations with Russia's partners in the war against Germany. There must always be a possibility, while it lived, that it might one day assume its original character. Nations cannot, in any case, be on satisfactory terms with another controlling an organization whose purpose is to interfere in their internal affairs. So long as the Soviet Union remained comparatively weak and held itself aloof from international politics, the Comintern was merely a nuisance. But, as a weapon able to destroy other nations from within, it would be an intolerable menace in the hands of the most powerful European state.

Although the Comintern is dead, and the Soviet government has thus given an unequivocal pledge of its willingness to abstain from future attempts to undermine the independence of its neighbours, the result is only to remove a cause of conflict between the Soviet Union and other Powers, without lessening the distance between the capitalist and Soviet systems. Communists will place their hopes as before in the final victory of their principles over capitalism, even if they are content to allow other peoples find their own way to the promised land. "Workers of the World, Unite!" is still the official motto of the Soviet state. The very name of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics is a repudiation of both national and territorial limits. The Union is capable in theory of indefinite extension. A Polish, a German, or a French Soviet Socialist Republic could be added in the same way as a Ukrainian, an Estonian, and a Lithuanian without any but the slightest alterations to the constitution. Its founders intended that it should be the nucleus of an œcumenical union of nations, which they believed might be formed when the overthrow of world capitalism had been completed. So also the



Communist Party of the Soviet Union was until recently merely a section, nominally at least, of the Communist International, on a footing of equality with the Communist parties of other countries and under an obligation, like them, to put the interests of Communism before those of any one state. By the dissolution of the Comintern the link, at any rate the formal link, between Communism inside and outside the Soviet Union has been broken. But that cannot sever the bonds of sympathy between Communists everywhere or effect the ultimate objects that all of them have at heart, if they are sincere in the faith they profess. It would be a gross error to underestimate the challenge that Soviet Russia, triumphant over Fascism, will present to the capitalist nations, or the attraction that Communist ideals will exercise upon the masses in every land. Those who believe that the economic exploitation of man by man and the domination of race over race are not necessities of nature will look for inspiration to Moscow with greater confidence than ever. And those who think that through subordination of the individual to the collective will, by scientific planning of all departments of human activity, civilization can be raised to a new level will the more readily acknowledge Russian leadership.

On the other hand, there are factors which may be expected to limit, in some respects even diminish, Soviet influence abroad in the future. The success of Communist propaganda in the years after 1917 was due to its universal appeal to oppressed classes and nationalities. The very weakness of the Soviet state and the intensity of hatred with which Bolsheviks were regarded by the rulers of the earth were elements of strength. Communism, like the early Christian Church, thrived on persecution. But promise has now become achievement, and hopes have been only imperfectly and partially realized. The Soviet Union can properly be called a socialist society, but certainly not, as Communists themselves are the first to recognize, a communist society, that is to say one in which the apparatus of the state has "withered away", because it is no longer needed, where men live together as brothers without constraint, each receiving from the community what he requires and freely contributing to it according to his ability. It would be easier to demonstrate that Soviet Russia is moving away from true communism than towards it. Expropriation of capitalists and landlords has mitigated but not abolished inequalities of income and privilege. They do not tend to decrease. On the contrary, a process of stratification may be observed in Soviet society. Destruction of the autocratic Tsarist government has produced a more efficient, but also a more absolute rule, and only the shadow of what we call democratic rights. The dictatorship of the Communist Party shows no signs of abdicating, or rather only declines in proportion as the personal authority of Stalin mounts. It would be inept to call Stalin the successor of the Romanovs ; yet the gradual accumulation of power in his hands is curiously suggestive of the position of Augustus Caesar, in name just the leading citizen of the Roman Republic, actually the first of the Roman emperors. All

this has not been lost on the outside world, including the part of it sympathetic to Soviet Russia.

Soviet external policy has also proved a disappointment to idealists who were simple enough to imagine that a socialist state would not behave like others. If Russians want to recover the territory lost to them after the Revolution and obtain satisfactory strategic frontiers, they may do so. But they cannot prevent people drawing the necessary conclusion, that a Soviet imperialism exists, with many points of resemblance to Tsarist, and that Communist dogma is its tool. Nor, again, has the experience of countries occupied by Soviet forces from 1939 onwards invariably prejudiced them in favour of the Soviet Union.

The aims of the Soviet state and of international Communism have clashed from the beginning, and, while Soviet statesmen have never been able to resist the temptation to make use of Communist adherents beyond the borders of the Union, they have also been conscious of the disadvantage of rendering themselves unpopular with other governments and arousing anti-Russian prejudice. The Comintern was largely a defensive device during every stage of its variegated career. Had foreigners not intervened forcibly in favour of the counter-revolution it is doubtful whether it would ever have come into existence at all. Its disappearance must weaken, if not put an end to, Russian influence over Communists in other countries, an eventuality which Moscow appears to regard without alarm. In the last twenty years there has been a constant trend in Soviet affairs towards nationalism; and a nationalist outlook is not compatible with fidelity to an international ideal. The interest of Soviet Russia, for example, that post-war Germany be kept in a peaceable and defenceless condition inevitably conflicts with the development of German Communism; seeing that, as the Bolsheviks found between March and November, 1917, it is a grave, almost a fatal, handicap to a political party to let itself be identified with a national enemy. The idea, far-fetched to say the least, of a sovietized Europe uniting the peoples of the Continent in one Communist super-state seems better calculated to frighten than to attract Russian Communists. It might even be a case of Europe annexing the Soviet Union rather than the other way round. Communists outside the Soviet Union have followed the same road as those inside. If, during the Spanish Civil War, and later, after 1941, in occupied France, or Yugoslavia, or Italy, they have played a leading part, out of proportion to their numbers, it has been because of their energy and courage rather than their doctrines, and because they have been willing to subordinate ideology to the practical necessities of the struggle against Fascism. It will not be surprising if the nationalism of some of them proves stronger than their Communist beliefs.

The war with Hitler's Germany produced an opposite effect on Russia to the last war. Instead of disintegration it made for greater unity, stimulated patriotism, augmented racial self-consciousness. The heroes of Russian history were reinstated, Tsarist traditions revived, the Orthodox Church regained lost ground, Pan-Slavist tendencies reappeared, memories and instincts buried for a time under a revolutionary avalanche

sprang up again. The new Russia, in spite of fundamental and irreversible changes, displays more and more clearly the lineaments of the old. It is unlikely to be a temporary phenomenon. Vested interests in the existing order have grown up and multiplied. The Soviet state, even more than the Tsarist, rests upon, and is supported by, an innumerable host of officials whose livelihood and ambitions are directly involved with its fortunes. A society so constituted is not of a kind to be tempted by the thought of ideological crusades. It is a society self-absorbed and self-reliant in the highest degree; imbued, indeed, with an intense spirit of nationalism, but a nationalism that is Soviet rather than Russian, looking inwards rather than outwards, bent on the conquest of nature, not of mankind.

Russian Communism in a quarter of a century has altered almost beyond belief, if not beyond recognition. The formulas of the Revolution are repeated, its idols venerated, but the gap between the Soviet Russia of today and that of Lenin's lifetime is in some ways greater than between the latter and the Russia of serfdom. Neither has the rest of the world stood still. Contemporary Britain is quite a different country from what it was at the height of the Red Peril, when Lloyd George was Prime Minister and the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston sat in the Foreign Office. Capitalist democracy remains; but it is in process of gradual transformation. The activities of the state and the responsibilities of the community have immensely increased; the economic power of the individual has been circumscribed. Thus while Soviet Russia has turned to the Right, though not backwards to the primitive society of Tsarism, Britain has moved perceptibly further to the Left. It will be long before the two systems come together. Yet similarities may well be accentuated and differences grow slighter. Possibly both will be superseded one day by a new system, containing some of the characteristics of each. It would be rash to say that either democracy or Soviet Communism, as they exist at present, is more than a stage in the progress of human institutions. Meanwhile we have much to learn from Soviet Russia, and Russians also from us. Willingness on both sides to recognize the merits of the political and social ideas and achievements of the other should help materially, together with the practical arguments for common action, towards that "close and friendly collaboration" foreshadowed, perhaps too optimistically, by the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of 1942. Nor should we overlook the sentimental connection derived from the memory of comradeship in arms, even if it is unwise to place so much trust in the permanence of emotional ties between one nation and another. The Anglo-Soviet Treaty provides a framework. But it is only a framework, which may or may not come to have a solid and durable content.

## TABLE OF DATES 1553—1945

1553	Chancellor's first journey to Moscow.
1557-72	Jenkinson's journeys to Russia.
1682	Accession of Peter the Great.
1698	Visit of Peter to England.
1709	Battle of Poltava.
1714	Accession of George I.
1716	Death of Charles XII of Sweden.
1720	British fleet sails to the Baltic to aid Sweden against Russia.
1721	Treaty of Nystadt ends the Northern War.
1725	Death of Peter.
1756	Convention of Westminster between Britain and Prussia.
	Treaty of Versailles between France and Austria.
	Outbreak of Seven Years' War.
1757	Russia allied with France and Austria against Prussia.
1762	Accession of Catherine the Great.
1766	Chatham's attempt to form Anglo-Prusso-Russian alliance.
1772	First Partition of Poland between Austria, Prussia and Russia.
1774	Treaty of Kutschuk-Kainardji between Russia and Turkey. Russian territory extended to northern shore of the Black Sea. The Sultan undertakes to protect the Christian religion.
1780	The Armed Neutrality.
1788	Anglo-Prussian intervention against Denmark, ally of Russia.
1789	Beginning of the French Revolution.
1791	Britain and Prussia intervene between Russia and Turkey over Ochakov.
1793	Second Partition of Poland.
	War between Britain and the French Republic.
1795	Third Partition of Poland.
1796	Death of Catherine the Great. Accession of Paul.
1798	Treaty of alliance between Britain and Russia.
1799	Suvorov's campaign in Italy.
	Anglo-Russian expedition to Holland.
	Napoleon First Consul.
1800	The Armed Neutrality revived by Paul.
1801	Assassination of Paul. Accession of Alexander I.
	Destruction by Nelson of Danish fleet at Copenhagen.
1802-03	Peace of Amiens.
1805	Third Coalition against France formed by Britain, Austria and Russia.
	Mack's capitulation at Ulm.
	Battle of Trafalgar.
	Battle of Austerlitz.
1806	Death of Pitt.
	Battle of Jena.
1807	Battles of Eylau and Friedland.
	Peace of Tilsit.
	British seizure of the Danish fleet.
1812	Napoleon's invasion of Russia. The Retreat from Moscow.
1813	Defeat of Napoleon at Leipzig.
1814	Abdication of Napoleon.
	Opening of Congress of Vienna.
1815	Napoleon returns from Elba. The Hundred Days.
	Battle of Waterloo.
1818	Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle.
1820	Spanish and Neapolitan revolutions.
	Congress of Troppau.
1821	Beginning of the Greek War of Independence.
1822	Death of Castlereagh. Canning becomes Foreign Minister.
	Congress of Verona.
1825	Death of Alexander I. Accession of Nicholas I.
1827	Treaty of London between Britain, France and Russia.
	Battle of Navarino.

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- 1828-29 Russo-Turkish War.  
 1829 Treaty of Adrianople.  
 1830-31 Polish insurrection.  
 1832 Mehemet Ali invades Syria.  
 1833 Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi.  
 1838 Beginning of first Afghan War.  
 1839 Renewal of war between Ottoman Sultan and Mehemet Ali.  
 1840 Convention of London. Britain, Austria, Russia and Prussia undertake to protect the Sultan against Mehemet Ali.  
 1844 Visit of the Emperor Nicholas to England.  
 1848 Year of Revolutions.  
 1849 Russian intervention against the Hungarians.  
 1854 Outbreak of Crimean War.  
 1855 Death of Nicholas I. Accession of Alexander II.  
 1856 Treaty of Paris.  
 1861 Emancipation of the serfs in Russia.  
 1863-64 Polish insurrection.  
 1869 Opening of the Suez Canal.  
 1870 Franco-Prussian War.  
 Russian denunciation of the Black Sea clauses of the Treaty of Paris.  
 1874-80 Disraeli Ministry.  
 1875 Outbreak of revolt in Herzegovina.  
 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War.  
 1878 Congress of Berlin.  
 Beginning of second Afghan War.  
 1880-85 Gladstone Ministry.  
 1881 Assassination of Alexander II. Accession of Alexander III.  
 1882 British occupation of Egypt.  
 1885 Penjdeh incident.  
 1886 Second Salisbury Ministry. Beginning of twenty years of Conservative ascendancy.  
 1887 Demarcation of Russo-Afghan frontier.  
 1891 Construction of Trans-Siberian railway begun.  
 1894 Dual Alliance between France and Russia.  
 Death of Alexander III. Accession of Nicholas II.  
 1894-95 Sino-Japanese War.  
 1897 German occupation of Kiaochow.  
 1898 Lease of Port Arthur by China to Russia.  
 Lease of Wei-Hai-Wei by China to Britain.  
 1899 Outbreak of Boer War.  
 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance.  
 1904 Outbreak of Russo-Japanese War.  
 Anglo-French Agreement.  
 Dogger Bank incident.  
 1905 Tangier crisis. Fall of Delcassé.  
 Abortive revolution in Russia. Grant of constitutional government by Nicholas II.  
 Liberals in power in Britain.  
 1906 Algeiras Conference.  
 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention.  
 1908 Revolution in Turkey.  
 Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.  
 1909 Russia and Serbia forced by German ultimatum to recognize Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.  
 1911 Agadir crisis.  
 Italo-Turkish War.  
 1912 First Balkan War.  
 1913 Second Balkan War.  
 1914 Austro-Hungarian attack on Serbia. Outbreak of first World War.  
 Russian defeat at Tannenberg.  
 Battle of the Marne.  
 Russian successes in Galicia.  
 1915 Twenty-one Demands presented by Japan to China.  
 Dardanelles campaign.  
 Italy enters the war on the Allied side.  
 Russian withdrawal from Poland and Galicia.  
 Bulgaria enters the war on the side of the Central Powers. Conquest of Serbia.

- 1916 German defeat at Verdun.  
Brusilov's victory in Galicia.  
Battle of the Somme.  
Roumania enters the war on the Allied side and is crushed.
- 1917 Russian Revolution begins. Abdication of Nicholas II.  
U.S.A. enters the war on the Allied side.  
Bolsheviks seize power in Petrograd and proclaim Soviet government of Russia.
- 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.  
Last German offensives in the West.  
Beginning of Allied intervention in Russia.  
Surrender of the Central Powers to the Allies.
- 1919 Foundation of the Comintern.  
Signature of the Treaty of Versailles.  
Climax of the Civil War in Russia.
- 1920 Russo-Polish War.  
End of the Civil War in Russia.
- 1921 Russo-Persian treaty signed in Moscow.  
Anglo-Soviet commercial treaty concluded in London.  
Russo-Turkish treaty signed in Moscow.  
Russo-Polish peace treaty signed at Riga.  
New Economic Policy introduced.  
Great famine in Russia.
- 1921-22 Washington Conference on naval disarmament, China and the Pacific.
- 1922 Genoa Conference. Russo-German Treaty of Rapallo.  
Turkish victory over Greeks. Turco-British crisis.  
Fall of Lloyd George Ministry.
- 1922-23 Lausanne Conference.
- 1923 Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr. Collapse of German currency.
- 1924 Death of Lenin.  
First Labour government in Britain.  
British recognition of Soviet government.  
Temporary settlement of question of German reparations by the Dawes Plan.  
"Red Letter" election in Britain. Conservatives in power.
- 1925 Locarno Treaties.
- 1926 British General Strike.  
Germany enters the League of Nations.  
Kuomintang successes in China.
- 1927 Arcos raid. Rupture of Anglo-Soviet diplomatic relations.
- 1928 Beginning of first Five-Years Plan.
- 1929 Second Labour government in office.  
Wall Street slump.  
Resumption of Anglo-Soviet diplomatic relations.
- 1930 Signature of new Anglo-Soviet trade agreement.  
Rise of Nazi party in Germany.
- 1931 Economic crisis in Germany and Britain.  
Fall of Labour government. National government in power.  
Japanese seizure of Manchuria.
- 1933 Hitler German Chancellor.  
Trial of Metropolitan-Vickers engineers in Moscow.  
Japan leaves the League of Nations.  
Failure of World Economic Conference.  
Germany leaves the League of Nations.
- 1934 Soviet Russia enters the League of Nations.
- 1935 Hitler reintroduces compulsory military service in Germany in defiance of Treaty of Versailles.  
Anglo-Franco-Italian Conference at Stresa.  
Signature of Franco-Soviet pact of mutual assistance.  
Italo-Abyssinian War. League sanctions applied against Italy.
- 1936 Popular Front success in Spanish elections.  
Germany occupies demilitarized Rhineland zone.  
Italian conquest of Abyssinia completed.  
Popular Front government in France.  
Montreux Conference on the Straits.  
Beginning of Spanish Civil War.  
Formation of Berlin-Rome Axis.  
Signature of Anti-Comintern Pact by Germany and Japan.



- New constitution of U.S.S.R.  
 1937 Chamberlain Prime Minister.  
 Outbreak of Sino-Japanese War.  
 1938 Hitler annexes Austria.  
 Czechoslovak crisis. Munich Conference. Czechoslovakia dismembered.  
 1939 Hitler enters Prague and incorporates Bohemia and Moravia in the German Reich.  
 Destruction of Czechoslovakia completed.  
 Cession of Memel territory by Lithuania to Germany.  
 Spanish Civil War ends with victory of Franco.  
 British guarantees given to Poland, Greece and Roumania.  
 Litvinov superseded by Molotov as Soviet Foreign Commissar.  
 Anglo-Franco-Russian negotiations in Moscow.  
 Russo-German pact of non-aggression.  
 German invasion of Poland. Second World War begins.  
 Partition of Poland between Germany and Russia.  
 Russian protectorate over Baltic States established.  
 Outbreak of Russo-Finnish War.  
 1940 German occupation of Denmark and Norway.  
 German conquests of Holland and Belgium.  
 Baltic states incorporated in the U.S.S.R.  
 Fall of France.  
 Roumania compelled to cede Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to Russia.  
 Battle of Britain.  
 1941 Russo-Japanese treaty of non-aggression.  
 German conquests of Yugoslavia and Greece.  
 Hitler's invasion of Russia.  
 Signature by Cripps and Molotov of Anglo-Soviet agreement.  
 Russian counter-attack in front of Moscow.  
 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. U.S.A. and Britain at war with Japan.  
 1942 Japanese conquests of Malaya, Burma, Philippines and Netherlands East Indies.  
 Anglo-Soviet treaty of alliance concluded in London.  
 British victory at El Alamein.  
 Anglo-American occupation of Algeria and Morocco.  
 1943 German disaster at Stalingrad.  
 Anglo-American victory in Tunisia.  
 Dissolution of the Comintern.  
 Fall of Mussolini.  
 Italian surrender.  
 Anglo-Russo-American Conferences at Moscow and Teheran.  
 1944 Russian advance into Poland and Roumania.  
 Anglo-American invasion of France.  
 Armistices signed with Roumania, Finland and Bulgaria.  
 1945 Hungarian armistice signed.  
 Crimea Conference.  
 Surrender of Germany.  
 Potsdam Conference.  
 Soviet declaration of war on Japan.  
 Japanese surrender.  
 Meeting of Five-Power Council of Foreign Ministers.  
 Moscow Conference.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

This book does not lay claim to be a history of the relations between Britain and Russia, which would require many volumes. It is merely an essay on the interaction of two peoples during the course of several hundred years. Up to the end of Tsarist rule the facts are fairly well established. From 1918, and particularly from 1931, onwards there are many gaps in our knowledge and most of what has been written is to a greater or less degree tendentious. The main lines can, however, even at this date be discerned without too much difficulty. No attempt has been made to give fresh information, only to throw some light on a subject hitherto hardly, if at all, explored as a whole. The sources utilized have been chiefly standard historical and biographical works covering the period. Much also is owed to the line of distinguished authors, especially Mackenzie Wallace, Maurice Baring, Sir Bernard Pares, the Webbs and Sir John Maynard, who have interpreted Russia to British readers. References to some of the individual works consulted are contained in the following notes.

## CHAPTER I

Page 15 Stephen Graham in his *Ivan the Terrible* (1932) gives a racy account of Ivan's dealings with Chancellor, Jenkinson and later English envoys. The Queen did not take the Tsar very seriously, but was willing to humour him for commercial reasons and also out of curiosity.

Page 16 Burnet's well-known description of Peter may be read in his *History of His Own Times*, vol. II, pp. 221-2. It is evident that he did not find the task deputed to him of enlightening the Tsar about the English religion and constitution a congenial one. Peter's interest in religion was severely practical, and the majesty of the law did not impress him. "Are these all lawyers?" he asked when he visited the courts at Westminster; "I have only two lawyers in my empire, and I mean to hang one of them when I go home."

Page 16 "At the end of the eighteenth century Great Britain was still overwhelmingly dependent on Russian hemp and only slightly less so on Russian flax." Sumner, *Survey of Russian History* (1944), p. 268.

Page 19 Chatham's phrase occurs in a letter written by him to Shelburne in 1773, that is just after the first partition of Poland and during Catherine's war against Turkey. Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (1892), vol. VI, p. 76.

Page 20 See Schuyler *Peter the Great* (1884) vol. I, pp. 223 ff., for General Gordon. Also Morfill, *History of Russia from Peter the Great to Alexander II* (1902), pp. 12 ff. Morfill says that "Scotch adventurers had swarmed" to Russia from the days of Ivan the Terrible. Gordon left diaries which are of considerable value for the light they throw on Russia at the end of the 17th century.

English society was much entertained by the story of how Catherine dethroned and supplanted her unlucky husband, Peter III. "I interest myself now about nothing but Russia," wrote Horace Walpole to George Montagu in August, 1762. *Letters of Horace Walpole*, edit. by C. B. Lucas (1904), p. 344.

In his *Don Juan* Byron is not very kind to Catherine, or Suvorov:—

"Hero, buffoon, half demon and half dirt,  
Praying, instructing, desolating, plundering;  
Now Mars, now Momus; and when bent to storm  
A Fortress, Harlequin in Uniform."—VII, 55.

The one virtue he allows the Russian troops at the sacking of Ismail (1790) is that "they ravished very little":—

"But all the ladies save some twenty score  
Were almost as much virgins as before."—(VIII, 129)

It is probable that the treatment of Poland by Catherine and her great general had a lot to do with Byron's opinion of them. Kosciuszko in 1794 was as much a hero to the Whigs as Kossuth in 1849.

Page 22 According to Lecky (*loc. cit.*), it was probably thanks to England that Russia was able to occupy the Crimea and establish her ascendancy on the Black Sea without a war with France.

## CHAPTER II

- Page 26 See Phillips, *The Confederation of Europe* (1914), pp.30 ff., for the Novosiltsov mission. The important part played by Alexander in the struggle against Napoleon, and the influence of his idealism on the reconstruction of Europe after the fall of Napoleon, are justly assessed in this masterly work.
- Pages 28-29 The quotations are taken from Alison's *History of Europe*, Chap. XLV. Alison was a fervent Tory, but the inactivity of the Whigs in 1806-7 has been generally condemned.
- Page 29 In his manifesto breaking off relations with Britain and proclaiming the principles of the Armed Neutrality, Alexander set forth Russian grievances on account of British failure to co-operate against Napoleon and condemned the attack on Denmark as an act of violence "of which history, so fertile in wickedness, does not afford a parallel example." Alison, *op. cit.*, Chap. LI. History is not so innocent as all that, but even British historians admit the bombardment of Copenhagen to have been a high-handed act. The circumstances of the attack on the French fleet at Mers-el-Kebir in 1940 were rather similar but far more excusable.
- Page 33 Webster in his *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822* (1925), p.101, gives Castlereagh's reasons for supporting Austria against Russia.
- Castlereagh and Alexander came into heated conflict with each other almost from the first moment they met, and before the opening of the Congress the former had shown himself "violently opposed to the Tsar's schemes (on the question of Poland and Saxony) and was preparing to combine all Europe against him." Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1812-1815* (1931), p.329.
- Page 34 Castlereagh used to be unfairly treated, but the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction. Webster's monumental work is that of an advocate not a judge. He admits, however, that Castlereagh exaggerated the menace of Russia. *Op. cit.*, p.495.
- Page 35 Castlereagh put forward the idea of an independent Poland at the Congress, but only, says his ardent champion, because he knew it was impossible. *Op. cit.*, p.342.
- Alexander's invasion of Finland after Tilsit had as much, or little, justification as the Soviet invasion of 1939. But his treatment of the Finns, when Sweden ceded the country to him, was extremely generous, over-generous from a Russian point of view. They were given the benefits of independence without any of the burdens, and Alexander even reunited the province of Viborg, which had been Russian for sixty years, with the Grand Duchy. It was this territory that the Soviet government went to war with Finland in 1939 to regain. A writer who cannot be suspected of pro-Russian sympathies calls the settlement one "unique in the annals of conquest." Jackson, *Finland* (1938), p.49. A policy of russification, resisted by the Finns, was begun in 1898 under Nicholas II, but up to the end of Tsarism Finland kept her separate existence and the country prospered immensely in the first World War. Not a Finn was called up to fight for Russia. The recent Soviet treatment of Finland has also been distinguished by generosity.
- Page 36 See Hyde, *Princess Lieven* (1938) pp.90 ff., for an amusing account of Alexander's visit to England. The wife of Prince Lieven, Russian ambassador in London from 1812 to 1834, performed the strange feat of becoming the mistress successively of Metternich and Guizot. She was a woman who, by a combination of social and political gifts, made a remarkable place for herself in English life, and through her friendship with Whig and Tory statesmen, Grey and Aberdeen in particular, she even exercised a certain influence on British policy towards Russia.
- Page 37 The quotation is from Phillips, *Modern Europe* (1901), p.3.
- Pages 38-39 See Phillips, *The Confederation of Europe*, for the debate between Alexander and Castlereagh at Aix-la-Chapelle.
- Page 41 The British and Russian ambassadors at Naples, did, indeed, even after the Protocol, join in attempting to help the moderate against the extreme party and thus save the Neapolitans from themselves; and they nearly succeeded. "If the Neapolitan democrats had only shown a little more common sense, Metternich might have bitterly rued the day when he agreed to meet the Tsar at Troppau." Webster, *For. Pol. of Castlereagh, 1815-1822*, p.288.
- Page 43 Thus, for example, Britain and Russia co-operated over the questions of Greece, of Turkey in 1840, of Italy at the crisis of 1859 and of France, when Bismarck threatened her with war in 1875.

Page 44 See Maynard, *Russia in Flux* (1941), Chap. VI, for the relations between the Slavophiles and the Orthodox Church, and (p.151) for Palmer, who was trying to effect a reconciliation between the Anglican and Orthodox Churches, like others before and since his day. The Slavophiles, of course, were not all silly : Dostoevsky is enough to prove that.

The quotation is from *My Past and Thoughts : Memoirs of Alexander Herzen*, (Engl. trans., 1924), Vol. II, pp.228-9. Herzen was a brilliant publicist, who edited an anti-Tsarist newspaper that circulated secretly and with great effect in the reign of Nicholas I.

Page 45 One of the characters in Turgenev's *Smoke*, a novel of the 'sixties, says that when half a dozen Englishmen gather together their talk always turns to some practical topic, like the submarine telegraph ; that among Germans the question of German unity, and among Frenchmen that of the fair sex cannot be avoided. But when Russians meet the future of Russia and the decadence of the West is sure to be the sole subject of their conversation.

The observer referred to is D. Mackenzie Wallace. See his *Russia* (1877), vol. II, p.429, vol. I, pp.192-3, pp.404-5, pp.430-1, etc.

Page 46 Mackenzie Wallace (*Russia*, vol. I, p.167) relates his surprise at finding on two occasions in peasant houses a translation of Buckle's *History of Civilization*. No fewer than four Russian translations of Buckle's work were made in the beginning of Alexander II's reign, and his ideas seem to have had an extraordinary fascination for Russians at that time.

Byron exercised an influence of the first order over the two greatest Russian poets, Pushkin and Lermontov, and Scott similarly influenced the Russian novelists. On the whole, however, Russian literature and thought in the nineteenth century probably owed more to French and German than to English writers.

### CHAPTER III

Page 50 Aberdeen had travelled extensively in the Near East as a young man, and was later given a special mission to the Austrian government in 1813. At the outbreak of the Greek revolt Castlereagh sent him the draft of a dispatch to St. Petersburg deprecating any encouragement to the Greeks. Aberdeen replied with arguments which, if they had been accepted, would have initiated a policy towards Turkey similar to that pursued by Canning in 1826-27. Stanmore, *Life of Aberdeen* (1893), p.70. It is true that as Foreign Minister in the Wellington government in 1828-30 Aberdeen adopted a pro-Turkish attitude, but he was expressing the Duke's policy, not his own.

Page 52 To assert, as British historians sometimes do (see, for example, Grant and Temperley, *Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (1939), p.207), that it was British policy that liberated Greece is rather rich, considering the part played by Wellington.

The Emperor Nicholas used to say that he thanked God he resembled his grandmother, Catherine the Great, in nothing except the profile.

Page 53 By a secret article of the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi it was agreed that the obligations of Turkey should be fulfilled by her closure of the Dardanelles on the demand of her ally. This article, which was communicated by the Turks to Palmerston, inspired the most alarm of all, since it appeared to turn the Straits into a Russian fortress.

Page 55 Not all Liberals were anti-Russian. Richard Cobden wrote a pamphlet, *Russia*, in 1836 in answer to the russophobes. He declared that the spread of the Russian Empire had invariably increased instead of diminishing the growth of civilization, and, with pardonable exaggeration, that there had been "lavished upon Poland more false sentiment, deluded sympathy and amiable ignorance than on any other subject of the present age." Later Cobden and Bright made themselves highly unpopular by openly disapproving of the Crimean War.

Page 56 G. M. Trevelyan, who is by no means unfriendly to Palmerston, says of him in his *British History in the Nineteenth Century* (1923), p.297, that "as Foreign Minister he achieved nothing tangible for the cause of liberty." But the British public firmly believed him to be the scourge of foreign tyrants. An irreverent person once called Palmerston "the most successful impostor since Mahomet."

Page 58 The historian referred to is Spencer Walpole, in his *History of England*, vol. V, p.127. Aberdeen has in general been harshly treated by posterity. See, however, the appreciation of him in Cecil's *British Foreign Secretaries, 1807-1916* (1927). It is true, perhaps, that he contributed to the disaster, since Nicholas was convinced that he would never declare war on Russia.

- Page 58* Tennyson's *Maud*, with its references to "the long, long canker of peace" and the "blood-red blossom of war" appeared during the war.
- Page 59* Palmerston had proposed in 1832 to appoint Stratford Canning as ambassador at St. Petersburg, but he had already made himself disagreeable to the Russians and the Tsar refused to accept him.
- "To contend at once with the pride of the Emperor, the anaticism of the Turks and the dishonesty of Stratford is almost a hopeless attempt"—Aberdeen to Sir T. Graham. Stanmore, *Life of Aberdeen*, p.271.
- Page 60* For Tolstoy at the siege of Sevastopol see *The Private Diary of Leo Tolstoy, 1853-1857*, edit. by Aylmer Maude (1927).
- The letter of Aberdeen referred to is to be found in *Stanmore's Life*, p.302. He characterized war as "strictly justifiable" but "most unwise and unnecessary."
- Page 62* Russian statesmen were accustomed to assert that "Pan-Slavism" was a meaningless term invented to frighten the public of western Europe. Sir Bernard Pares, on the other hand, in his *Russia* (1941), says that, while Slavophilism was a sincere product of Russian thought, Pan-Slavism was a weapon in the armoury of Tsarist foreign policy. Both these statements are misleading. Pan-Slavism certainly existed, and took concrete shape in the Pan-Slavonic Committee in Moscow. But the movement was not created by the government. It grew naturally out of Slavophilism, which had an imperialist aspect evident at the time of the Crimean War.
- Page 65* According to Creasy, in his *History of the Ottoman Turks* (1877), p.548, the Turkish default did more than anything else to induce a belief that the speedy downfall of the Ottoman Empire could not be averted, and to arouse prejudice against the Turks in England.
- Page 66* For Madame Novikov see *The M.P. for Russia. Reminiscences and Correspondence of Madam Olga Novikoff*, edit. by W. T. Stead (2 vols., 1909); her *Russian Memories* (1917); and "O.K." (Olga Novikov), *Russia and England from 1876-1880* (1880). Stead, the famous Radical journalist and later editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, became at the time of the Slav revolt in the 'seventies, and remained, vehemently pro-Russian. He formed a curious alliance with Madame Novikov, the faithful daughter of Tsarist and Orthodox Russia, which served as a link between the Pan-Slavonic Committee and the Gladstonians.
- Page 69* Salisbury thought that Constantinople was for Britain merely a question of prestige. Early in 1877 he wrote, "I cannot go very far with those who dread the Russians. Except the size of the patch they occupy on the map there is nothing . . . to explain the abject terror which deprives so many Anglo-Indians and so many of our military party here of their sleep. . . . Yet we are asked to believe that their presence in the Black Sea and the Bosphorus would be a serious menace to England in the Mediterranean."—Salisbury to Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India. Cecil, *Life of Lord Salisbury*, (1922), vol. II, p.142. If he apparently changed his opinion a few months later it was for tactical reasons.

## CHAPTER IV

- Page 70* Wallace, *Russia*, 2 vols. (1877).
- Page 71* "It was Palmerston's persistent determination to tear up the treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi which drove Russia to retaliate on Persia, and it was the consciousness of the increasing influence of Russia at Teheran which induced Aukland to interfere at Cabul."—Spencer Walpole, *History of England*, vol. V, p.245.
- Anglo-Russian negotiations for an understanding between the two empires began in 1869 and led to the Gortchakov-Granville agreement of 1872, by which Russia recognized Afghanistan to be outside her sphere of influence. This agreement was the forerunner of the Convention of 1907. But later developments in the 'seventies obscured it.
- Page 74* The book referred to is Curzon's *Russia in Central Asia* (1889). When he visited St. Petersburg before starting on his journey, Curzon relates, he was struck by the friendly feelings of Russians to Englishmen and their bitter hatred of Germans and everything German. The Franco-Russian alliance was already within sight.
- Page 80* For "Pan-Teutonism" see Halévy, *History of the English People, Epilogue 1895-1905*, bk. I., chap. I (Engl. trans. 1926). Pan-Teutonism, like Pan-Slavism, never became more than the vaguest of conceptions. It left one important legacy, for Anglo-American co-operation dates from this time.

- Pages 81-82 Chamberlain, according to his biographer, was among the first British statesmen to favour an alliance with Japan. When Russian warships were sent to Port Arthur at the end of 1897, he wrote to Salisbury suggesting that Japanese assistance should be invoked against Russia. Garvin, *Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, vol. III (1934), p.249.
- Page 88 Grey wrote in 1912—"Previous to the agreement [with Russia in 1907] it was our policy to head back Russia in every direction. We did it in the Crimean War, we did it in the time of Lord Beaconsfield and we did it in recent years in the Far East. For many years I have held that this was a mistaken policy, that it would be a better way to come to an agreement with Russia." Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon* (1940), p.193.
- "In the diplomatic system constituted by France and Russia," says Halévy, "Russia was the sun, France the planet [before the revelation of Russian weakness in the Japanese war]. It was therefore natural that politicians and journalists who about the end of 1901 began to contemplate the possibility of an understanding with Russia and France thought of Russia before they thought of France." *Op. cit.* bk. III, chap. II.
- From almost the moment he landed in India in the last days of 1898, Curzon became involved in difficulties with the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister because of the aggressive policies he pursued, or tried to pursue, in order to protect India from Russian and French designs. "He always wants me to negotiate with Russia," said Salisbury on one occasion, "as if I had 500,000 men at my back, and I have not." Ronaldshay, *Life of Lord Curzon*, vol. III (1928), p.206.
- Page 89 Harold Nicolson's *Lord Carnock* (1930) contains an admirable account of Nicolson's negotiations with Isvolsky. See pp. 66-67 for the views he formed at Teheran.
- Isvolsky subsequently acquired a sinister, and exaggerated, reputation as a war-monger when he became ambassador in Paris. But before his quarrel with Aehrenthal, at any rate, it was certainly not his policy to stir up trouble between the Franco-Russian group and the rival combination.
- Page 91 See Trevelyan's *Grey of Fallodon*, pp.187-8 for Grey's opinion of the value of the Anglo-Russian Convention. "Anyone behind the scenes knows that what we have gained strategically is real, while the apparent sacrifices we have made commercially are not real." Grey writes, in his *Twenty-five Years*, vol. I (1925), p.165, "In its primary and cardinal object, the security of the Indian frontier, the Agreement was completely successful."
- Page 92 The quotation is from Nicolson, *Lord Carnock*, p.262.

## CHAPTER V

- Page 93 *The World Today*, vol. VI (Gresham Publishing Co.).
- Page 94 Baring, *Mainsprings of Russia*, p.318.
- It was through Turgeniev that the West came to appreciate Russian literature. Already a celebrity in the Parisian literary world in the 'sixties, he was quite well known both personally and as a writer in England by the 'seventies. He paid several visits to this country and on one of them received an honorary degree at Oxford. See Lloyd, *Ivan Turgeniev* (1942).
- Page 95 The quotation is from the essay on Tolstoy in Arnold's *Essays in Criticism*, 2nd series (1888).
- Lenin lived in London in 1902-3. In his letters (*Letters of Lenin*, edit. and tr. by Hill and Mudie (1937), pp.154 ff.) he has little to say of Britain or British affairs. London to him was the home of Karl Marx rather than the city of Dr. Johnson and Dickens. He seems, like his compatriot, Princess Lieven, to have enjoyed the English climate.
- Page 97 What exactly passed between Aehrenthal and Isvolsky at Buchlau has been a matter of much speculation, but there can be no reasonable doubt that Isvolsky was deceived as to Austrian intentions in some way or other.
- Page 100 Hitler's peace-time habit of springing weekend surprises, like some of his other habits, was an old German device. The diplomatic bomb of Agadir was hurled at London and Paris on Saturday, July 1st, 1911.
- Page 102 See for a well-balanced statement, based on the diplomatic documents, of the attitude of the Russian government prior to the outbreak of war in 1914, Spender, *Fifty Years of Europe* (1933), pp.375 ff.—"If it is possible to speak of Russia having one mind, that mind was in 1914 to keep the peace and prolong the *status quo* as long as possible."

- Page 102 "I am convinced that, if the Triple Entente could be converted into another Triple Alliance, the peace of Europe could be assured for a generation or two"—Nicolson to Hardinge in November, 1913. Nicolson, *Lord Garnock*, p. 202. See Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon*, pp. 112-3.
- Page 103 Grey's account of his difficulties over Persia between 1907 and 1914 is to be found in his *Twenty-Five Years*, vol. I, pp. 166 ff.
- Sazonov formed the conviction from his stay in this country that "if there were two countries on earth fore-ordained by nature to peaceful co-operation, they were Russia and England." Sazonov, *Fateful Years, 1909-1916* (Eng. trans. 1928), p. 22. He thought that the chief obstacle to Anglo-Russian friendship was not rivalry in foreign policy but the difference in forms of government. That is hardly a profound view. On the subject of Persia Sazonov drily remarks: "It seemed to us at times that some of the British agents appointed to watch over the inauguration of the plan for remodelling the Persian political structure on the English pattern shared our scepticism" [about the miraculous effects of parliamentary government at Teheran].
- Page 104 Justice is done to Russian military achievements during the first three years of the war in Churchill's *The World Crisis. The Eastern Front* (1931). The late Prime Minister, it should be observed, has been an enemy of Communism but never an enemy of Russia. See for a first-hand account General Knox's *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917*, 2 vols. (1921).
- Page 105 The best description of the last stages of Tsarist rule is given by Pares in his *Fall of the Russian Monarchy* (1939).
- Strictly speaking, Rasputin was not a monk but a professional holy man (with the emphasis on the first adjective).
- Page 106 The most brilliant account of the Revolution is that of Leon Trotsky in his *History of the Russian Revolution* (Engl. trans. 1932-3), the most scientific that of W. H. Chamberlin in his *Russian Revolution*, 2 vols. (1935).

## CHAPTER VI

- Page 110 For the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, see Wheeler-Bennett, *The Forgotten Peace : Brest-Litovsk, March 1918* (1939). General Hoffman, Ludendorff's representative at the Conference, gives an interesting picture of it, and also of the mentality of the German High Command, in his *War Diaries and Other Papers*, 2 vols. (Engl. trans. 1929) Vol. II., chaps. XVI and XVII.
- Page 111 The importance of the Treaty, as Rosenberg points out in his *History of Bolshevism* (Engl. trans., 1934), did not lie in the severance from Russia of Poland, Finland and the Baltic provinces; "it lay in her cession of the entire South of Russia—the Ukraine." (p. 115).
- Page 112 For the attitude of the British government to the Communists after Brest-Litovsk, see Lloyd George's *War Memoirs*, vol. VI, chap. LXXXIII. "We were fighting our last desperate battle in the Great War and we had to take our own measures to protect our vital interests in the East." (p. 3164).
- Bruce Lockhart, who was the British representative in Moscow, thinks that there was a chance of agreement between the Allies and the Communists up to June, 1918, but the evidence is not convincing. Lenin frankly told Lockhart that he was determined Russia should not become a battlefield as long as he could help it. Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent*, pp. 270-1.
- Page 113 "It was inevitable that before long our co-operation with these allies [non-Bolshevist administrations and movements] should give our Russian activities an appearance of being aimed at overthrowing the Bolshevik government. That was certainly not the original intention." Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. VI, p. 3181. There is no doubt that the claim is justified.
- As late as the beginning of July, 1918, the month when Allied intervention began, President Wilson was still "sweating blood" over the question of what it was "right and feasible" to do in Russia—Wilson to House on 8th July, 1918. Baker, *Life and Letters of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. VIII, *Armistice, 1918*, pp. 261-6.
- Page 115 Bruce Lockhart in his *Memoirs of a British Agent* bears witness to the lenient nature of Communist rule in the first half of 1918 (p. 241).
- Page 116 The passage quoted from the Lloyd George memorandum is to be found in Churchill, *The World Crisis : The Aftermath* (1929), p. 195.

Pages  
119-120

For British aid to the Whites see Churchill, *op. cit.*, chap. XII. Denikin received from Britain 250,000 rifles, 200 guns, 30 tanks and large quantities of munitions and equipment. Several hundreds of British officers and N.C.O's assisted his army. Altogether Britain contributed by September, 1919, to the anti-Bolshevist cause £100 million worth of material. The value, however, was largely nominal, since the material consisted mostly of surplus war stores.

Page 120

Eight thousand British troops were sent out to Archangel in the summer of 1919. It is clearly implied in Churchill's account that evacuation of the forces already there was not at any rate the whole purpose of the reinforcement. "When eventually," he says, "it became certain that the Czech troops had no longer the will nor Admiral Kolchak the power to form any contact with the North Russian area, the final act of evacuation took place." (p.242).

There were also German troops under the enterprising General von der Goltz fighting against the Communists in the Baltic region, with to some extent Allied connivance. For the extraordinarily confused situation in the Baltic in 1919, see Tallents, *Man and Boy* (1943).

Page 121

Churchill has some mordant things to say of the policy, "or want of policy," of the Allies in Russia. *Op. cit.*, p.235 especially. "Either the policy of helping all the anti-Bolshevist forces which encircled Russia should have been straightforwardly pursued, or a peace should have been unitedly made with the Bolsheviks, on terms which assured some hopes of life and liberty to the loyal Russians who had been fighting with the Allies in the war." (p.274).

"Curzon was drawn to Persia by every fibre of his faith and temperament," because that country was "at once the weakest and most vital link" in the chain of buffer states "stretching between India and all European interference" which it was his dream to create. "It seemed in those early months of 1919 that this dream was about to be realized . . . the obstructions which in the past had impeded any perfect design for the defence of India and the Empire had suddenly and completely been removed. Those former incumbrances—the *entente* with Russia, the fear of Germany, the doctrine of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire—had been swept aside by earthquake and by fire. The ground had at last been cleared for the complete, the final, the perfected plan. And he himself—the ideal architect of such a reconstruction—was there; untrammelled, dominant, equipped." Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last Phase* (1934), pp.120-122.

Page 122

Reliable books on Poland are rare. One of the best of recent years is Buell's *Poland: Key to Europe* (1939), which manages to be sympathetic without being partisan. See p.81 for Pilsudski's attack on Soviet Russia in 1920.

Page 123

For an account of how the Curzon Line came to be drawn, see an article in *The Times* of 12th January, 1944. The writer comes to the conclusion that at the Polish census of 1931 there were, on a liberal estimate, hardly more than 2,250,000 to 2,500,000 Poles east of the Curzon Line out of a total population of more than 11,000,000.

Pages  
125-126

Sir Arnold Wilson in his *Persia* (1932) says that the treaty was a "reasonable and straightforward scheme for the rehabilitation of Persian administration." That may be, but it was assuredly onesided, as his description of it (pp.139 ff.) shows. The *Survey of International Affairs*, 1928, in an authoritative analysis of the attitude of Persia and the other Moslem nations to Britain and Soviet Russia respectively after the war (pp.360 ff.), calls it "an attempt to force upon an unrepresentative Persian government" an agreement "which would have meant the domination of Persia by Great Britain."

Page 127

According to Graves, *Briton and Turk* (1941), Lloyd George's pro-Greek policy was "a sort of inverted Disraelism in which Greece was to take the place which Turkey had taken in Stratford Canning's hopes and Disraeli's schemes."

Page 130

There is a full account of the Genoa discussions and the Treaty of Rapallo in Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs* (1930), vol I. This work, by an American writer, is of great value for a study of Soviet foreign policy between 1917 and 1930, and both the present and the next chapter are indebted to it. Fischer writes from a Soviet point of view, but not on the whole uncritically.

Page 132

Nicolson in his *Curzon: The Last Phase*, pp.281 ff., explains Curzon's objects and methods at Lausanne, and particularly his aim of driving a wedge between Russians and Turks. There is no doubt that Curzon was able to lay the basis of a restoration of Anglo-Turkish friendship. But Nicolson hardly does justice to the statesmanship of Kemal and Ismet.



## CHAPTER VII

- Page 134** See, for the Comintern, Rosenberg, *History of Bolshevism* (Engl. trans., 1934) and Borkenau, *The Communist International* (1938), both authors who write from inside knowledge; and, from the point of view of British Socialists, the Webbs, *Soviet Communism* (1935), vol. II, pp.1091 ff.
- Pages 134-135** Rosenberg (*op. cit.*, p.127) even goes so far as to say that in the years 1918-20, Lenin and the other leaders of Bolshevism "devoted all their energies" to promoting revolution in central and western Europe. But that is an overstatement.
- Page 135** Having conquered Russia, says Borkenau, with his organization of professional revolutionaries, a specifically Russian conception foreign to even the most revolutionary socialists of the West, Lenin attempted to transfer the same methods to other countries. The history of the attempt is the history of the Comintern. "The history of the Communist International is, largely, an instance of a clash of cultures" (*op. cit.*, p.26).
- Page 138** The Russian reaction to Locarno is dealt with at length in Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, vol. II. The fundamental reason, perhaps, why Soviet leaders feared Britain more than France, in spite of the French connection with Poland, was that French policy aimed at encircling Germany, whereas British policy aimed at reconciling French and Germans, on a basis, so it seemed to Moscow, of common enmity to Russia. The opinion of men like D'Abernon lent some colour to the belief.
- Page 139** D'Abernon's views on the Russian menace are to be found in his *An Ambassador of Peace* (1929), vol. I, pp.20 ff.
- "I see no reason to apprehend any shifting of opinion in Germany such as will endanger the existence of a large majority in favour of the peaceful solution of international difficulties"—*ibid.* p.17. D'Abernon's knowledge of the real conditions in Germany may be judged from his contemptuous reference to Hitler in vol. II, p.52. After the Munich *putsch* of 1923, he says in a footnote, Hitler faded "into oblivion."
- Page 140** The quotation is from Petrie, *Life and Letters of Sir Austen Chamberlain* (1940), vol. II, p.259.
- Page 142** In a speech at Birmingham in January, 1927, Chamberlain described his Chinese policy as one of "letting the Chinese Communists have enough rope to hang themselves." Petrie, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p.365.
- Page 143** In his *Moscow 1911-1933* Monkhouse relates that he was in Leningrad at the time of the Arcos raid and saw tens of thousands of people marching in an anti-British demonstration. They were very friendly to him, and the demonstration appeared to have been ordered from above (pp.238-9). There is little doubt, however, that Soviet statesmen, although they may have had reasons for making the most of the peril, were seriously alarmed this year at the possibility of a renewal of foreign intervention. The murder of the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw seems to have been among the circumstances that particularly frightened them.
- Page 144** After 1924, according to Rosenberg, Stalin developed ideas that involved him in conflict with his colleagues. The most important was that of the possibility of realizing socialism in a single country, which has since 1924 become "the fundamental doctrine of Bolshevism" (*op. cit.* p.199).
- "The construction of a powerful armaments industry was the undisguised and, in certain limits, completely justified 'international' aim of the first Five-Years Plan." Strauss, *Soviet Russia* (1941), p.188.
- Page 147** An account of his experiences is given by Monkhouse, one of the engineers involved (*op. cit.*).
- Monkhouse (p.301) thinks that the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs was left completely in the dark about the arrest of the engineers by the OGPU. It appears to be highly probable.
- Page 148** The new orientation of Soviet, as of British, policy came about gradually. Possibly the first sign was the non-aggression treaty made with France in November, 1932, that is before Nazi rule had been established in Germany. There was no clear-cut change when Hitler came into power at the beginning of 1933. Indeed, the Russo-German treaty of friendship of 1926, a reaffirmation of the Treaty of Rapallo, was renewed in May of that year.

- Page 149 It seems to have been in December, 1933, that the Soviet government, in an interview given by Stalin to an American journalist, first hinted that Russia might join the League of Nations. See *Why the U.S.S.R. joined the League of Nations*, New Fabian Research Bureau pamphlet (1935), p.11. This pamphlet contains a number of useful extracts from speeches by Soviet statesmen and articles in the Soviet press in the period preceding, and on the occasion of, Russia's entry into the League.

## CHAPTER VIII

- Page 151 The Franco-Soviet Pact, although not signed until May, 1935, just after Stresa, was the work of Litvinov and Barthou, assassinated at the end of 1934, and was bound up with Russia's decision to enter the League of Nations. It was a sickly infant from birth and never supplemented by a military convention. The half-hearted attitude of French statesmen to it is shown in the account given by D'Ormesson, a French journalist in close touch with Barthou, in his *France* (1939). In London, despite the circumstance that British approval had been given to its signature, it was always unpopular, like its French parent. Is there only a coincidence in the fact that the signature of the Franco-Soviet Pact immediately preceded the Anglo-German naval agreement?
- Page 153 It is rather implied, in the discussion of the Montreux negotiations contained in the Survey of *International Affairs for 1936* (pp.618 ff.), that rivalry with Russia to secure the friendship of Turkey was the underlying motive for the somewhat puzzling British attitude at the Conference.
- Page 154 According to Borkenau, (*The Communist International* (p.383)) the Paris riots of February, 1934, caused by the Stavisky affair, proved to be the turning-point in the evolution of the Comintern. French Socialists and Communists joined in calling a one-day strike, which was the first instance of united action to occur in any country since 1929. But not until the following year was the Popular Front movement really launched.
- Page 155 Later events have made it plain that, if the League Powers had closed the Suez Canal to Italian shipments of men and material to East Africa in the autumn of 1935, they would have had little cause to fear Italian retaliation. The defeat of Italy and the triumph of the League would certainly have made the history of the next four years very different. There are also good reasons for supposing that Hitler was unprepared for war with France in March, 1936, and would have withdrawn his troops from the Rhineland if the French had taken counter-measures.
- Page 156 "The final justification of [Blum's Spanish] policy was 'orders from London.' It could not be put that way too openly, but the hints were not lost on the deputies, nor on the public. Madrid was not worth London." Brogan, *The Development of Modern France* (1940), p.714.
- Eden was no more likely to regard with favour Stalin's interference in Spanish affairs than Castlereagh the Emperor Alexander I's. The words in which he defined British policy towards Spain might have been used by more than one of his predecessors during the last hundred years :—"Ever since the outbreak of the Spanish conflict His Majesty's Government have had two main objectives before them. First to prevent that conflict from spreading beyond the frontiers of Spain, and second to preserve, whatever the final outcome of the conflict, the political independence and territorial integrity of Spain."—Speech at Liverpool on 12th April, 1937. Eden, *Foreign Affairs* (1939), p.189. The difference of opinion between him and Chamberlain that led to his resignation at the beginning of 1938 was concerned with the methods of applying this policy, not with the policy in itself.
- Page 159 The attitude of Chamberlain to Russia may be gathered from a quotation from a speech in the House of Commons on 28th February, 1938 :—"The peace of Europe must depend upon the attitude of the four major Powers—Germany, Italy, France and ourselves. . . . Surely it cannot be disputed that those four Powers I named are the most powerful in Europe. After all, Russia is partly European but partly Asiatic." Neville Chamberlain, *The Struggle for Peace* (1939), pp.84 and 89. The implications of this statement of opinion help to explain both Munich and also the events of the summer of 1939.

Page 164

It is quite likely that ideas of a Russo-German arrangement had not merely occurred to statesmen of both nations before May, 1939, but had actually been discussed between them. There is no justification, however, in the present state of our knowledge, for believing that matters had gone to any length before the fall of Litvinov, or that the Russians were not until then sincerely anxious and disposed to reach an agreement with the Western Powers against Hitler. From May onwards, Russian sincerity is open to doubt, and more and more so as time went on. The view here expressed is founded largely on the official documents contained in *Le Livre Jaune Français* (1939), especially on the dispatches of Coulondre, the well-informed French ambassador in Berlin; and also on the speeches of Soviet statesmen at this period, in particular Stalin's speech of 10th March, 1939, and Molotov's speech of 31st May, 1939. On 6th May, that is three days after Litvinov's resignation, or dismissal, a "person particularly well-placed to know the Führer's intentions" threw out very broad hints of an impending Russo-German scheme to partition Poland, in conversation with a member of the French embassy. "In regard to Russia," says Coulondre, "one cannot help being struck by the coincidence between the intentions attributed to the Führer and the resignation of M. Litvinov" (p.154). Again, in his dispatch (No. 125) of 9th May, he alludes to the rumours that had spread throughout Berlin in the last twenty-four hours that Germany had made, or was about to make, proposals to Russia (p.164). The speech of Stalin referred to affords clear evidence of Russian anger with the Western Powers, together with a warning that their policy might end in "a serious fiasco" for them; but it also undoubtedly shows a desire to secure their co-operation against Germany. On the other hand, Molotov's speech of 31st May, read in the light of subsequent events, strongly suggests that negotiations with Germany for something more than an economic agreement had either begun or would soon begin. (These speeches were inadequately reported in the British press at the time. They may be conveniently found in Pritt, *Light on Moscow* (1939), a skilful forensic defence of Soviet policy in 1939.)

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Pares, *Russia* (1941), p.227.

Page 170

The Russo-German pact was signed on 23rd August. The following day the Berlin correspondent of *The Times* reported that he had learnt "reliably but unofficially" that the two countries had agreed to partition Poland in a manner approximately corresponding to the frontier fixed a month later. *The Times*, 25th August, 1939. Probably, however, no hard-and-fast agreement was made at this time.

## CHAPTER IX

Page 180

Churchill's explanation of his visit to Moscow in August, 1942, was given in his speech in the House of Commons on 11th November, 1942.

The Anglo-Soviet Treaty was signed in London by Eden and Molotov on 26th May, 1942. *Treaty Series No. 2* (1942). Cmd. 6376.

Page 184

The question of Poland's eastern frontier was certainly at the bottom of the Soviet-Polish breach in 1943. But it was only when Russian forces crossed the pre-1939 frontier in pursuit of the retreating Germans in January, 1944, that it became acute. In a statement issued on the 10th of that month the Soviet government for the first time publicly laid claim to the White Russian and Ukrainian territories occupied in September, 1939, in agreement with Germany. Simultaneously, however, it declared that the 1939 frontier might be modified in Poland's favour and offered to recognize the Curzon Line of 1919-20 (which in its northern part was considerably more favourable to Poland) as a basis of negotiation. *The Times*, 12th January, 1944. This was a shrewd move, for both the British and American governments had at the time committed themselves to the opinion that the Curzon Line was Poland's proper eastern frontier. In his speech in the House of Commons on 22nd February, 1944, Churchill cautiously but definitely supported the Russian claim. Although the adoption of the Curzon Line, even with modifications, means a large territorial loss to Poland, the loss of population is smaller in proportion, and of this population a minority are Poles.

Page 184

The Crimea Conference provided for the provisional government of Poland then functioning (that is the pro-Russian, so-called Lublin government) to be broadened by the inclusion of democratic leaders from both inside and outside Poland. A new Polish provisional government, a large majority of whose members were of the same persuasion as its predecessor, was accordingly formed on 28th June, 1945, and recognized by both Britain and the United States on 5th July, 1945, in the face of protests by the Polish government in London. *Chronology of International Events and Documents*, vol. I, No. 1 (New Series). The new government was committed to Russian views on the future frontiers of Poland and to the maintenance of close relations with the Soviet Union, but also to the holding of free elections in order to ascertain the will of the Polish people.

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A special correspondent of *The Times* reported that, for example, out of 50,000 persons employed by the two great concerns of Siemens, which used to supply 80 per cent. of Germany's electrical equipment, only 250 were working on the production of such things as wooden buckets and barrows. The great workshops had been completely stripped of their plant. *The Times*, 9th August, 1945. The Russian manner of collecting reparations was doubtless drastic, but also more workable, and in a way more humane, than the attempt made by the Allies after the first World War to exact tribute from future generations of Germans.

Page 192

On 19th March, 1945, the Soviet government denounced the Russo-Turkish treaty of friendship and neutrality of 1925. (*Bulletin of International News*, vol. XXII, No. 7, p.332). This was the prelude to Russian suggestions for a new agreement between the Soviet Union and Turkey, suggestions which, according to Turkish sources, amounted to a demand by Russia (1) for a revision of the Straits Convention, giving better guarantees of security to the Soviet Union; (2) for the cession by Turkey of some territory in eastern Asia Minor surrendered by Soviet Russia after the Revolution; and (3) for the elimination of anti-Soviet influences from Turkish affairs. The Turkish response to Russian pressure consisted of certain internal measures to satisfy the Russians on (3), a categorical rejection of (2), and an appeal in regard to (1) to the terms of the Montreux Convention, which provides for revision in 1946 by negotiation between the signatory Powers. Turkey, that is to say, sought to turn the question of the Straits, the main point at issue, into an international instead of a Russo-Turkish debate. Thus prompted, the United States government put forward proposals to Turkey for an amendment of the Convention, of which the gist appeared to be that concessions were to be made in favour of Russia but the defence of the Straits was to be left to the Turks. The Turkish government accepted these proposals as a basis of discussion. The Russian reaction, however, was hostile, taking the form of fresh territorial claims against the Turks, and it seemed possible that the Russians, whatever the precise means they thought necessary for the end, would persist in demanding that effective control of the Straits should be in their hands. The result might be to make Russia a Mediterranean Power for the first time. It was significant that the Soviet government had already displayed an interest in Tangier and the Italian Red Sea possessions, which might be only a matter of prestige, but also might have something to do with their situation on the outlets leading from the Mediterranean to the oceans.

A dispute arose between Moscow and Teheran in the autumn of 1944, owing to a refusal by the latter to grant oil concessions desired by the Soviet government in Persia. Little was heard of Russo-Persian friction until about a year later, when Teheran began to complain of Russian troops in northern Persia and of the activities of the pro-Russian Tudeh party. Then came the revolt in Azerbaijan, whose leaders admittedly enjoyed Russian sympathy, if nothing more. Moscow, however, in distinction from the case of Turkey, disavowed any design on Persian territory and reaffirmed the pledge of respect for the independence and integrity of Persia given at the time of the Teheran three-Power Conference of 1943. The general motive of Soviet policy in simultaneously threatening Ankara and Teheran seemed to be to extend Soviet influence in the Near and Middle East by installing friendly or dependent governments in adjacent countries, as in Europe. The Persian and Turkish affairs were no doubt connected. Perhaps one reason for stirring up trouble against the Teheran government at that particular time was in order to put additional pressure on the Turks, who were liable to take alarm at disturbances across their frontier with Persia. The Straits question, at any rate, could hardly fail to be regarded in Moscow as the most important and delicate issue between the Soviet Union and its two small neighbours.

*Page 195* Russia declared war on Japan on 8th August, 1945. On 14th August Japan surrendered, and on the same day the Russo-Chinese treaty was signed at Moscow. Before the end of the month Soviet troops had occupied all Manchuria and southern Sakhalin, and two of the Kurile Islands (*Chronology of International Events and Documents*, vol. I, No. 4 (New Series). On 2nd September (*C.I.E.D.*, vol. I, No. 5 (New Series) p. 117), Stalin broadcast to the Soviet people, recalling Japan's record of aggression against Russia from 1904 onwards, and stating that the Japanese defeat meant that southern Sakhalin and the Kuriles would pass to the Soviet Union and serve as bases for the defence of Soviet territory in the Far East against any future aggression by Japan. A secret agreement to this effect had been made with Britain and the United States at Yalta.

*Page 197* Walter Lippmann, *US Foreign Policy* (1943).

*Page 206* The decision to disband the Comintern was taken by the Executive Committee on 15th May, 1943, and formally given effect on 10th June, 1943. *B.I.N.*, vol. XX, No. 11, p. 512, and No. 13, p. 603. Stalin's statement, from which the quotation is taken, was made on 30th May, 1943. *The Times*, 31st May, 1943.

*Page 210* In *The Russian Peasant And Other Studies* (1942), pp. 452-3, Maynard discusses the working of the Soviet Constitution of 1936 and concludes that there is no reason to expect it to establish anything like what the West means by democratic institutions. "Freedom—or so it seems at present—is to be divided between East and West in mutually exclusive fractions: the one getting such freedom as depends upon economic equality, and the other such freedom as legal and political equality may be capable of creating. . . . The long isolation of Russia from the West, and of the West from Russia, has kept the two halves of Democracy apart from one another. Are we to witness the coming together of the two in a complete whole?" To that question he does not venture an answer.

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